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NEXT GENERATION VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 4

APRIL 1997

**FINAL
FANTASY VII**



INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

TAIL OF THE SUN

RALLY CROSS

WILD ARMS

RAYSTORM

CYBERBOTS

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First I'd like to say with honor it is to bring you the US exclusive on Konami's new Castlevania for the PlayStation. We've perhaps never chased down a game so vigorously as this, and I'm forever in Konami US and Japan's debt for making it happen. I'd love to divulge the US title of said 2D masterpiece but cannot as the decision, though down to two possibilities, has not been reached.

We've had a tough run of it this month, assembling the publication amongst the hammering thunder of construction as we expand the GameFan offices making room for our growing book division and MegaFan. So the arrival of Castlevania along with an issue of predominately good software was indeed welcome.

It's great to see the continuation of gaming legacies and from the looks of things, that evolution is not about to change. Not only are sequels to the games we've cherished for years, like MegaMan, Castlevania, Street Fighter, Star Wars, Contra, and Final Fantasy, abundant, but new games as well are gathering new and old users alike and spawning sequels at a record pace. Off the top of my head, Resident Evil, Tomb Raider, Gex, Crash, and Nights all have sequels in the works.

Not unlike the movie business, our industry is sequel driven. It makes sense. If something works and there's room for improvement and/or enhancement, while remaining true to the original formula, gamers, like movie-goers, will be a part of it. It's when a sequel is made for money's sake that things tend to get a tad ugly. There's nothing worse than that sinking feeling when you've built up excitement for a product due to what it's based on and then unwrap it to find a worthless scrap of bad game theatre.

It all boils down to the corporate/marketing side allowing the creative side the freedom and trust necessary to produce gold. When the two mix that and result is usually tragic, but working in tandem, each staying on his/her side of the fence, things usually turn out better all the way around. Let's hope we enjoy the latter, as things progress throughout this reign of 32/64 bit gaming and into the gaming scene of tomorrow.

While we're on the subject of preserving the industry, which can be put in peril, I must express my concern regarding copying devices, which have once again reared their ugly heads. Touted as a means of never paying for a game again, this is simply not true. These devices are not only illegal but the end result of their use is higher prices across the board and, should they become widespread, it's not unthinkable that certain companies may invest their development dollar elsewhere. I can't imagine pouring years of creative energy into a game only to see an incomplete version circulating, or people giving it away for free. If we want great games we have to show a little respect for the people who make them. If we all play nice together, the end result will benefit us all, and in a world as crazy as ours, video games are a big benefit.

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I FINALLY MAKE THE
MAST HEAD AND IT'S
NOT FINISHED!!

DON'T LOOK AT ME!

UM, I THINK SOMEONE
FORGOT TO PAINT US...

AMHA! WE'RE GAMEBOY!!

WHO NEEDS PAINT WHEN
YOU'RE AS PURDY AS ME!

I FEEL MAKEO-MEN-HEN!

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FREE AGENCY,
AND CONTRACT
DISPUTES,
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IS THE FUTURE
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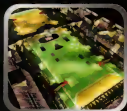
Which is sort of like a ball. Except that it totally disregards the laws of gravity.

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your hovering Rotofoil, grab onto the Plasmorb, and blaze it into your opponent's goal.

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Champions. With anti-gravity arenas, blazing thrusters,

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Earn the title of Master Blazer, and you'll bask in the glory of piloting the Ultimate Rotofoil.



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Dunn.
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Andy
Watson.



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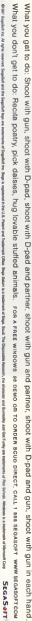
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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

READERS' TOP TEN

1. Tomb Raider - PS/Saturn
2. Mario Kart 64 - N64
3. Tekken 2 - PS
4. Wave Race 64 - N64
5. Suikoden - PS
6. Crash Bandicoot - PS
7. Final Fantasy VII - PS
8. NIGHTS - Saturn
9. Persona - PS
10. Twisted Metal 2 - PS



READERS' MOST WANTED

1. Final Fantasy VII - PS
2. Resident Evil 2 - PS
3. Tekken 3 - Arcade
4. Soul Blade - PS
5. Tomb Raider 2 - PS
6. Goldeneye - N64
7. SFA III - Arcade
8. MegaMan 8 - PS
9. Zelda 64 - N64
10. Crash Bandicoot 2 - PS



GF EDITORS' TOP TEN

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Castlevania X - PS | 6. RayStorm - PS |
| 2. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 7. Phantasy - PS |
| 3. Shining the Holy Ark - Saturn | 8. Hermie Hopperhead - PS |
| 4. Wild Arms - PS | 9. Metal Slug - Saturn |
| 5. MegaMan 8 - PS | 10. Dynamite Headdy - Genesis |
| 1. Rally Cross - PS | 6. Doom 64 - N64 |
| 2. Black Dawn - PS | 7. SFA 2 - PS |
| 3. Turok - N64 | 8. Parappa the Rapper - PS |
| 4. CoolBoarders - PS | 9. SoulBlade - PS |
| 5. Jet Moto - PS | 10. Choro Q - PS |
| 1. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 6. Puzzle Fighter II - Saturn |
| 2. Castlevania X - PS | 7. Turok - N64 |
| 3. Virtual On - Saturn | 8. Mario Kart 64 - Nintendo 64 |
| 4. SFA 2 - Saturn | 9. RayStorm - PS |
| 5. Suikoden - PS | 10. Soukyugurentai - Saturn |



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Street Fighter III - Arcade | 8. Assault Suit Leynos 2 - Saturn |
| 2. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 7. GTI Club - Saturn |
| 3. Castlevania X - PS | 8. Tevix Jr. - Keychain |
| 4. Mario Kart 64 - N64 | 9. Turok - N64 |
| 5. Elevator Action Returns - Saturn | 10. Target Earth - Genesis |
| 1. Street Fighter 3 - Arcade | 6. Ray Storm - PS |
| 2. Super Mario Kart 64 - N64 | 7. Shadows of the Empire - N64 |
| 3. Street Fighter Turbo-SNES | 8. Doom 64 - N64 |
| 4. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 9. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter - N64 |
| 5. SoulBlade - PS | 10. Street Fighter Alpha 2 - PS |
| 1. Vandal Hearts - PS | 8. Dark Rite - N64 |
| 2. RayStorm - PS | 7. Strider - Genesis |
| 3. Castlevania X - PS | 8. World Wide Soccer '97 - Saturn |
| 4. Assault Suit Leynos 2 - Saturn | 9. Wonderboy 3 - SMS |
| 5. Soukyugurentai - Saturn | 10. Chaotix - 32X |



DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest:

STANLEY LIU
PRESIDENT/CEO, KRONOS
DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Turok - N64 | 6. Star Gladiator - PS |
| 2. Mario Kart 64 - N64 | 7. Tekken 3 - Arcade |
| 3. Twisted Metal 2 - PS | 8. Tekken 2 - PS |
| 4. SoulBlade - PS | 9. Suikoden - PS |
| 5. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 10. Bushido Blade - PS |

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of the Month in Viewpoint.

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Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

Congratulations

to last month's winners:

First Prize:

Stephen Hung, Industry, CA

Second Prize:

David Avila, Artesia, CA

Third Prize:

Jordan William, Bradfield, TX

The Blue Bomber Takes to the Road...

START YOUR ENGINES!

MEGA MAN

Battle & Chase



drive:

- ☐ To pass a slower moving vehicle:
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- ☐ place car in gear
- ☐ check weapons & load ammo

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ADAM LINDSLEY, ILWACO, WASHINGTON

SECOND PRIZE WINNER:

YUNG-SUNG TU, NORTH CHARLESTON, S. CAROLINA

THIRD PRIZE WINNER:

JOH STEFFEN, CHANDLER, ARIZONA

Waka and Chief Hambleton seek the finest cheats, secrets and tips known to humanity, and we need them from YOU!! We'll look over all the codes you send and award a magnificent Grand Prize every single month! Remember, no cheap codes from previously published US magazines! Winners will be drawn each month and displayed in the only place where cheaters prosper. (Current subscribers who win a subscription will receive a one-year extension.)

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Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Hikaru & Knightmare present:
MARIO KART 64
 MINDNESS

SPOTCUTS!

With MK64 currently riding high in the all-format charts, GameFan proudly presents Knightmare and Hikaru's mini Mario Kart 64 strategy guide, complete with new shortcuts that'll make your competitors cringe! Sorry, but due to the lack of space we'll include the many other secrets we've found in the next issue!

KOOPA TROOPA ISLAND

Although most people already know about the cave short cut on this track, did you know that it is possible to make the jump into the cave without using a

Mushroom item? Simply top the jump button just before you reach the top of the romp end, if you're in the right position, you'll enter the cave. Also the item above the small mound (which you have to use the large romp to reach) is ALWAYS a spiked shell, even if you're in first place.

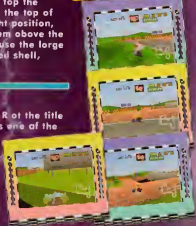
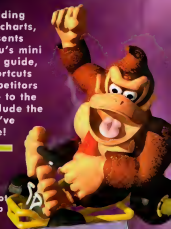
MARIO RACEWAY

Considered to be the true racer's track (just top L or R at the title screen for your fastest time), Mario Raceway contains one of the most spectacular shortcuts in the game. As you approach the mountain side corner leading down to the giant mushroom U-turn, drive slightly up onto the grass and then power down towards the outside lip of the corner using a Mushroom item (see sequence). Hop just as you reach the edge of the road end, if you've timed it right, you can clear the wall, cutting at least seven seconds of your lap time! You can land on both sides of the T-junction in the wall, although the right hand side saves more time.

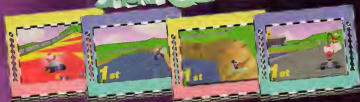
CHOCO MOUNTAIN

Using the same principle as the Mario Stadium shortcuts, slide and head directly into the wall directly below where the railings are in 100 and 50cc mode (see sequence).

Time it right, and even if the railings are there, you will still bounce up over the ledge and onto the higher portion of the track. The earlier you try this short-cut, the higher the wall, and the tougher it is to accomplish.



SHORTCUTS!



ROYAL RACEWAY

This shortcut **ONLY** works in 150CC mode, so it can't be used in Time Trial, I'm afraid. As you approach the second speed chevron on the large jump, turn left just as you hit the chevron and head out left off the jump towards the mountain. You can't make it all the way to the road, but if you can manage to land on the mountain side near the road (your character should go POOMPI!), you'll fall into the water and be placed back on the track near where you fell in, instead of back up on the jump!



RAINBOW ROAD

Near the start of the



WARIO STADIUM

1. Just past the starting line, turn left on the first bump in the track and head directly into the wall of about 50-60 KMH. Just as you are about to hit the wall, press jump, and if you time it correctly the jump should propel you up over the wall, and into the mogul field on the other side! Remember, you must hit the wall dead on.

track, as you approach the large, steep drop in the road, steer hard left and top jump the moment the track starts to dip. If done correctly you will leave the track and fly into space, only to land back on another portion of track way below you ... cutting out a third of the lap!!!

2. Now, turn around and head back towards the wall section, you just came over, only further down behind the starting line (you can see it over the wall). By using the same technique as detailed above (sometimes it helps if you power slide into the wall as well) you can bounce back to the other side of the track and cross the starting line for a lap of time of under seven seconds!!! This piece of wall is much trickier to climb than the first, and it takes more practice to master. If you're having trouble, try using a heavier character (Kong, Wario or Bowser), or try using a Mushroom item to give you an extra bit of speed as you collide with the wall.

3. If short cut 2 is a bit to difficult (or cheap!) for your liking, try this one for size. As you approach this right hand corner (see screen shots) power slide into the boards on your left exactly where we show you, and once again top jump just as you collide with the wall. Time it right and you'll clear the wall and land on the finishing stretch of the lap!



Welcome to the urban jungle

Crime is out of control, and the cops have been replaced by bounty hunters like you. No courts, no trials... just instant retribution. Fire up one of eight heavily-armed vehicles and buzz through eight zones of digitized devastation. Use guns, grenades, rocket launchers, tire treads...whatever it takes. After all, you don't get paid for being nice.



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SEGA SATURN

1 2
PLAYERS





In a previous Hocus Pocus, we mentioned that all of the characters in Soul Edge have changeable endings and to do so, you have to tap all of the buttons rapidly. Well, we now have the correct buttons to press for each and every ending. This should make things much easier on your hands... Sorry!

Taki - Press X.

Voldo - Press UP and DOWN on the control pad rapidly.

Mitsurugi - Use the control pad to move Mitsurugi left and right and forward. When you get close to Tanegashima, press SQUARE or TRIANGLE to deliver the strike.

Siegtreid - Press TRIANGLE.

Sophitia - Press RIGHT on the control pad.

Li Long - Press SQUARE or TRIANGLE repeatedly.

Rock - Press TRIANGLE.

Hwang - Press CIRCLE.

Cervantes - Press TRIANGLE.

Seung Mina - Press UP or DOWN repeatedly.

To get Soul Edge without beating the game with all of the characters, just leave the in-game time clock running (you'll see it in the OPTIONS screen in the upper-left hand side). When it reaches 20 hours, you will automatically receive Soul Edge as a playable character! Cheater!

To play on the Asia and Colosseum stage (which is only available in Edge Master Mode), simply set the ring size to 20 meters in the option screen. Now play a normal vs. game. It should first start off on Cervantes' stage, but play a few more times, and voila! The echo of the Colosseum awaits thee!

is fighting on the same stage getting on your nerves? Memorized all of the tunes yet? Have you seen the birds on Seung Mina's stage more times than you care to remember? Ha! Then we've got the code for you! When selecting your character, press and HOLD, L1 and SELECT on the first controller. Continue holding until you've finished selecting your character and until the match starts. This should start a cycling process through the stages (Ack!).

FIGHTERS MEGAMIX — SEGA SATURN (IMPORT) — PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES

Having trouble getting all of the characters in this awesome brawler? If you happen to have a Pro Action replay for the Saturn, you're in luck! Don't forget to input the Master Code!

MASTER CODE: F600924 C305
B600280 0000

PLAYER 1
INFINITE LIFE: 1606556C 01FF

VANDAL HEARTS — SONY PLAYSTATION (IMPORT) — PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES

Yes! A debug code! Unfortunately, only for those with a Pro Action Replay. Hey, can I help it if the majority of my mail consists of Mortal Kombat (for the Genesis?), Twisted Metal 2 (and some Part 1), and Sonic the Hedgehog or Sonic and Knuckles for the Genesis? C'MON PEOPLE! GET WITH THE COOL CODES!!!

DEBUG CODE: 80142434 0000

ALL RIGHTY PEOPLE! I WANT SOME UP-TO-DAYE CODES! FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, THERE'S A GXY UP FOR GRABS! IF YOU GUYS DON'T STOP SENDING ME THESE ANCIENT CODES, THEN I'M GONNA HAVE TO AWARD LOLLIPOPS AS FIRST PRIZE! — WAKA & CHIEF HAMBLEY ON



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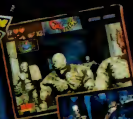




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I'll come right out with it. *Flaw* adventures. In my opinion, are highly suspect. Because as much how great they may be, once it's done... it's done. Repeatability factor for zero. Of course, the authentic or like, un-coordinated people probably never is the epitome of the interactive movie. So to those I highly recommend *Locusty*. It's a great adventure as these things go. Dark, moody and quite enthralling. It's a well-produced 2-disc set indeed. Personally, I'd rather just watch said review. Like *Night of the Dune*.

G C P M O 75



From the glory days of 16-bit comes that era's most engaging puzzle platformer all dressed up with sharp detail and deep color. The single biggest, and my favorite new feature, is the hilarious voice over which is written and performed incredibly well. This adds a new dimension to an already pretty much entertaining quest. The broken hat on my right (Tina's door) would opt for that character while I had the modeled ones increasingly better. The soundtrack is excellent as well.

G C P M O 78



Having never played the coin-op, I was excited about GNA's arrival. After playing it however, I'm less than enthralled. The moves, a vast array of IF-like maneuvers, are great, but the game design which takes you from room to room where you simply clear the screen of enemies is rather lame. I'll wait for GNA's 30 Streets of Rage-like game pieces on Core's. It's a 40-minute-long arcade port can live without. A nice production overall, but there's just not enough oomph on its own.

G C P M O **70**



Scud's greatest asset is its storyline and CG accompaniment. Dive into the game however, and you find a relaxed bag of safe scrolling goodness, and not-so-serious. Perilous—cheat. Most notably removed enemy—cheat. Gamings—well, hold to a minute. Sure, the functionality of the multi peripheral system is cool, but so stand alone auto scrollers, the game is rather repetitive it seems. Scud was designed around the gun + console premises, to it's a better 2 ply: game than fipgy. Still, polished overall offering with a tad pretense and goal.

G C P M O 79



I was hoping (no, praying) that Appleseed would take on those 34.7% respoonding enemy spirits, but sadly, they crush this early, too. On a positive note, the 3D graphics were immensely well as this version had the 3D engine in fully intact. The platforming portions are clunky, but otherwise *Contra: Legacy Of War* is a solid action game for the gamer who demands a game as challenging as he'll grow a beard to his knee beating it as hard. A 2D *Contra* is not

G C P M O 78



My love for Samurai Shodown aside, I think *King of Fighters* is SNK's best fighting game series. With the newest in this yearly updated series, *KOF '96*, SNK now boasts the top four spots on my list of favorite fighters. The Saturn version replicates the arcade beautifully, with the same amazing character graphics, highly animated backgrounds, and excellent control. The only real difference are the newly-added Survival Mode and slightly different values, and spaced meat/bomb

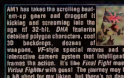
the contest-of-steel Psycho Soldier theme). I just put that when KDF '87 comes along. It'll still be 23.

G C R M D



This one's easy. Let's say you're like me, and you loved the 70-bit original. Now a 22-bit sequel comes along, and your expectations are high. Well, can you guess about it? **AVX**, complemented by fantastic music (as in really good) and excellent voice-overs for every character. The graphics, unfortunately, are pretty weak—there's just not enough parallax, special fx, or animation. And what are the Vikings doing clay-models now, instead of hand-drawn like the original? Oh well, it's still more at what I wanted, and I'm just happy it's a sequel.

G C P M O **81**



AMT has taken the scrolling beat-em-up genre and dropped it kicking and screaming into the age of 32-bit. DMA features detailed polygon characters, cool 3D backgrounds, dozens of weapons, 3D-style special moves and an interactive camera system that intelligently frames the action. It's like *Final Fight* meets *Virtua Fighter* with guns! The journey may be a bit short for my liking, but there's no doubt that it's a strong debut. See what it lasts.

G C P M O **89**



Reed is a cool character, and the dark and surreal world portrayed in his comic book is perfectly captured by the game's twisted visuals. However, the actual game that accompanies it isn't so great. It's not so much the concept that's gone wrong as the implementation. I love gun games and 3D platform/shooters, so the idea of combining the two appeals to me immensely. But this isn't the game to do it. The mechanics in the 2D sections are way more loose (not even close to *Super Mario Bros.*), while the gun sections just aren't satisfying enough. Plus, Reed's gun sounds like a satisfying *clunk*.

G C P M O **80**



While I have every faith in Nintendo (Castlevania X is amazing, you can't help but wonder why they'd leave out one of their most successful franchises ever to the company that made *Three Dirty Swines*). The point here is that this is a great anniversary of the PS era. The bad news is that the PS version was disappointing. It only has about 30 graphics, and new music, but the control system sucks beyond belief (like Smash TV on the Genesis) and the game is cheaper than D-War. This isn't the Gotro I know

G C P M O 75



Just as sure as night turns to day you can count on *SNK* to never stop making fighting games. I happen to like the *ADF* series, and one of its one of the few legitimate alternatives to Capcom's 2D beat-'em-ups. *ADF 96* tries a brace of new characters made their debut (two fighters accompanied by some juvenile faces from other *SNK* fighters) along with new techniques and graphics. The Saturn version is a 99% accurate conversion that perfectly recreates

all the 2D splendor of the Neo-Geo slug fest, and fans of the series are going to love it. I did.

G C R M O



American Idol school *Lost Vikings* too. Your sequel has arrived, in a somehow shiny 32-bit wrapper. By itself, I mean to say that the graphics are certainly gorgeous, just not what they could be. Still, it's good to see a game like this updated. There are even a couple of new characters to control. Outside of that though, there's not too much here beyond the 16-bit version. However, it still seems as clever as the first and is a fun game, especially with two players. Good news as well.

G C P M O 83



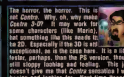
Step jumping quarters into the cockpit and enjoy a perfect arcade translation in every way, down to the last polygon. *Die Mord Aeschen* (avail on the Saturn/Gotta love cool 99 gaming! plenty of PK action) is a *Final Fight*-style beat-'em-up setting. Even the control is perfect, with countless combos and devastating gyros. The level construction is bland, but with no environmental hazards (like mud fire trucks and fire breathing dragons) as well as a half-a-dozen weapons there's plenty of substance. My problem: *SMA* is a cheat. Check out *A Little Death*.

G C P M O **84**



I'll start by saying how nice it is to see another 2D Saturn game. When all is said and done, that's where the SS truly excels. *Acad*, a unique merging of intense side-scrolling action and gun shooting, I found to be a refreshing break from the norm. Although lackluster in the play mechanics dept., the visuals are rich and well-rendered, the storyline and theme, tasty, and Sound himself, extremely likable to the point of quasi-workable. The tones are all bright but for the most end there's an OK, too.

G C P M O



The horror, the horror. This is not Contra. Why, oh, why make Contra 3-D? It may work for some characters (like Mario), but something like this needs to be 2D. Especially if the 3D is not exceptional, as is the case here. It's a little lessler, perhaps, than the PS version, then still sloppy looking and feeling. This just doesn't give me that Contra sensation I'm hoping and looking for. Next time Konami brings the mega-contra.

G C P M O 6



This is *KOF '98* translated almost perfectly onto the Saturn. All of the moves, background detail and animation are present, along with new voices and new arranged tunes, that perfectly complement the 2D fighting action. I particularly like *KOF '98*'s tuning system, which lets you close in *SF2*—definitely a good fit in my book! My only real criticism is that some of the characters are a bit outlandish, which detracts in the heavy two-player battles. Still, there's no doubt

that this is a polished game, and it's nice to finally see a Neo-Geo game get a perfect conversion.

G C P M O



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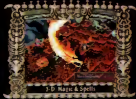
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COMING SOON

IN DEVELOPMENT

Clay Fighter

EXTREME OR 63-N-A-THIRD?

Look up your children, Clay fans—the Doh is back! Currently under development

by Interplay Productions are both a PS and N64 sequel to *Clay Fighter*, the 16-bit sleeper hit that featured animated plasticine models smackin' each other up side the head.

Although technically both versions are *Clay Fighter 3*, the PS version will be called *Clay Fighter Extreme*, while the N64 version

will come with the 'amusing' moniker, *Clay Fighter 63 1/3* (no, I didn't make that up). Both versions will feature 3D characters ("motion captured" off plasticine models, no doubt), 3D interactive

backgrounds (that let you knock your opponent into new areas, Kl-style), new characters and the return of some old favorites (e.g. Mr. Frosty, The Blob, Taffy).

The story finds the Clay Fighters, both new and old, plane-wrecked on the exotic locale of Klaymodo Isle. Here they must do battle against the evil Dr. Klugenheimer Von Kln (rlilgggt), the world infamous and crazed

"claymologist" whose goal in life is to make all the world and the life within it putty in his

hands. Will he succeed? His latest 'Clayotic Claymorphosis Mutagen' may guarantee just that! What the heck is CCMF? Beate me. But it sure sounds cool.

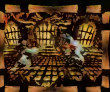
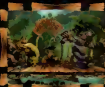
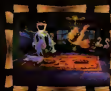
New characters include Houngan, an evil local witch doctor; Lockjaw Fooch, a beagle with a skill-saw maw; a trio of tumblers called the Zappa Yow Yow Boys; and a cyber-bunny named T-Hoppy. The fights take place in locations all over Klaymodo Island,

including beach and jungle stages, with each character possessing his own background and story line.

There's no word yet on how the *Clay Fighter* control system is going to change to incorporate the new 3D environments, or about any new game-

play features, but rest assured that the slapstick sense of humor and wacky moves that characterized the original games will make a marked return. We'll keep you posted. You lucky people, you. K

THE SHOTS ALONG THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE ARE ACTUAL N64 DEVELOPMENT SCREENS. ALL OTHERS ARE MOCK-UPS.



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IN DEVELOPMENT

DIMORPHODON



GameFrog recently had the chance to visit the DreamWorks offices for an early look at *The Lost World*, the game incarnation of Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* sequel due this summer.

As almost guaranteed hit, it's not surprising that a game is being developed around it, for both the PS and Saturn. But with Spielberg involved in initial stages of game creation, *The Lost World* could prove to be above your usual movie based game. What we have been shown thus far looks impressive.

The most striking aspect of the game is the look of the actual dinosaurs themselves. Using proprietary software (which DreamWorks has named Mori-x technology), an amazing level of character fidelity has been achieved. By stretching the disc textures map across the 3D model, typically awfully polygon overlapping and glitching at the joints is summarily removed. The Mori-x technology also allows for great control, on the real time model simply morphs into whatever position you request. For instance, you can make a dino jump to the middle of a roll with no break in the character's animation, even though this move wasn't necessarily intended by the designers. This constant smoothness almost makes the characters look pre-rendered, even though they're all rendered on the fly.

As for the game itself, it is presented in the now familiar 2.5-D of *Parasolman* and *Clockwork* fame. And it's easy to see why, as it allows for the precise movements of 2D while still allowing for a cinematic flare with a tagged moving camera. It still looks 3D, even though you don't have complete freedom of movement. So though you are limited to a set path, the designers have broken this up by implementing a branching system allowing you take different paths within levels.

In the early version we were shown, the sound effects had yet to be completely implemented. Some effects were in, such as the now classic T-Rex scream—and if you heard that, just like in the movie. A booming

symphonic score is in place, of which a MIDI version was in place, and it too was very good; very well composed. In fact, the developers even half-seriously joked that it's difficult to get any work done with the soundtrack attracting their attention.

The Lost World is still very early, so final play mechanics have yet to be nailed down. There are an endless of overall tweaking that needs to be done. But, if indeed, the rest of the game turns out to be as impressive as the disc's animations, another rare occurrence of a genuinely good game inspired by a film may be at hand. Look for further updates in the coming months as what is sure to be a big game this summer. SD

PERHAPS THE BIGGEST DRAW OF *THE LOST WORLD* IS THE ABILITY TO CONTROL SEVERAL DIFFERENT DINOSAURS. THESE RANGE FROM THE SMALL AND NIMBLE COMPY, TO THE GREATEST LAND PREDATOR OF ALL TIME, THE TYRANNOSAURUS REX. HEALTH IS ACQUIRED BY EATING FALLEN DINOS.



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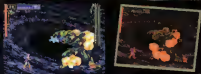
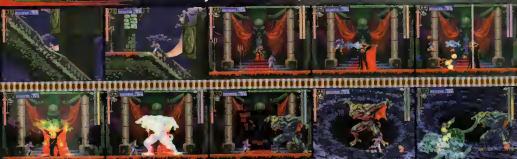


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JOURNEY BACK TO 1792 and the Transylvanian Countryside of Romania



After a series of epic battles, Richter Belmont finally succeeded in destroying Count Dracula, the ancient vampire who had been most recently resurrected by the dark priest, Shaft. One night 4 years later, under the bright glare of the moon Richter mysteriously vanished.

With no idea of where to begin her search Maria Renard set out to look for him. It was then that fate intervened...



Castlevania, the castle of Dracula, which is rumored to appear only once every century, suddenly and mysteriously materialized.

Meanwhile, powerful forces were at work in the life of a man named Alucard. The very same Alucard who had previously teamed up with Ralph C. Belmont to destroy his immortal father, Vlad Tepes aka Count Dracula, Alucard, in order to rid the world of his own cursed blood line, sealed off his powers and entered what was supposed to be an eternal slumber...

But now, that sleep has been disturbed. Alucard is aware of the evil that has once again arisen in his homeland.

The time has come once more for the forces of good and evil to engage in their ancient battle.

Dracula's castle beckons for you, in...

And so our adventure begins as Alucard enters the castle and you first glimpse the most highly animated character in Castlevania history...



ALCHEMY LABORATORY



As I'm writing this, listening to the music as the game sits idle, I am reminded how I once felt about gaming some years ago, before they'd broken the 3D barriers, when a great game was more of a phenomenon, like *Castlevania 4*, or *SNES* or *Bloodlines* on Genesis. The same can be said of many an 8-bit game as well. But things have changed considerably... or have they? Those of you who've been around for some years will undoubtedly celebrate the arrival of *Castlevania* on the PS, but I fear that those accustomed to 3D and polygons may view CV as less than it really is. For those people I would recommend perhaps a look through *Super Metroid* followed by this game when it's released, which is laid out in a very similar configuration. Or just take my word for it: If there is a game which could cause one to stand in the moonlight, clear their spot and summon a theme, *Castlevania* is it. As you play this phenomenon among 3D hand-drawn splendor, the music which will accompany you is among the finest ever produced, as it has been with all of the *Castlevania* adventures.

Since the storyline preceded this introduction, I'll get right to the game then. After playtest out the climactic ending of *Dracula X* (the last installment in the series) as Richter Belmont, you'll witness something truly incredible... Alucard. The son of Dracula himself, this character is drawn and animated beyond belief. He is so graceful in his movements that for the ten hours I've been playing I'm still in awe of his movements. As you acquire powerful items and weapons he becomes all the more mesmerizing. As lead characters go, he is the best I've yet seen.

The levels in this installment are all linked, similar to CV on the MSX or, as I mentioned before, *Super Metroid*. As soon as you reach the Library you'll want to purchase the map and begin filling in the vast areas before you. As you journey

MARBLE GALLERY



OUTER WALL

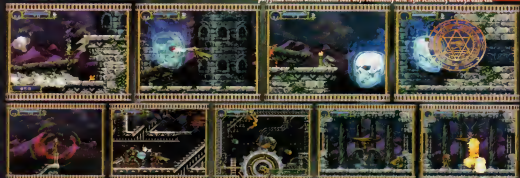


on, you'll talk to Maria quite often and meet some of the strangest creatures ever imagined. Each is accompanied by some crazy effects as they punch, which I'll get to later. As you search high and low amongst cavernous locations throughout and outside of the castle, the emphasis is placed on finding magic spells, flying friends, precious stones which you can exchange for money, magic capes, potions and other items necessary to unlock the wealth of areas you can't access. Across on the map are not highlighted until you've traversed them... and it's a big castle.





CLOCK TOWER



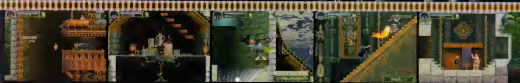
pews below. Breathtaking. In the Clock Tower, the weather is equally as nefarious as layers of fog twist in the background and huge glowing skulls fly about, hungry for a taste of human (well, half-human at least) flesh. Additionally, every enemy you kill is accompanied by some awesome effect like a pillar of fire or ethereal blast. It's just amazing. The first time Alucard jumped through the water I almost cried.

As I'm sure you've already assumed, the control is utter perfection to the point of pure sensory bliss, and the bonus... forget about it. I'll describe the one which concludes this layout. It's a massive nigger of twisted bodies and, as you swipe it (with, by this time, a powerful blade), many drop off and come forth while some burst apart, limbs flying. As you hack away, eventually you'll uncover the hideous core, a slimy arse with inner tracking. Only Konami can assemble such beautiful masses of goo for us to shred. I'm 70% into the adventure and, as I'm sure you've gathered, losing it. With every new level comes music from the gods along with more creatures I've never seen, my magic spells are multiplying and I'm armed to the teeth. Alucard can carry two weapons or one and a shield along with equipped spells, capes, and armor.

The game has gotten so good in parts I've actually stopped playing to savor what I've seen. Before I close this (ahem) preview and in case you're wondering, the original CV enemies are all here, the flying medusa heads, crumbling skeletons, shiny knights, along with many more twisted beasts from Transylvania.

Believe it or not, there is a lot more to tell, regarding the storyline, hidden places and faces, etc., but I've been sworn to secrecy. With the imminent release, these things will come. Until then... Count the days.

ROYAL CHAPEL



Not unlike every RPG ever created but new in the CV saga, Alucard gains MP (magic points) and HP (hit points) as he defeats enemies. So the longer you play, the stronger he gets, which makes the exploration element quite rewarding.

Graphically speaking, it looks could kill. I'd be dead. CV has some of the most beautiful art I have ever seen in a video game. Even the backgrounds to the enemy sprites, of which there are more-for more-than ever before, all are a sight for sore eyes. Even in the absence of parallax, the backgrounds are stunning, but for the most part you'll be playing among parallax you never thought you'd ever see on the PS. Up to six hazy levels with even the slightest for all detail moving deep in the screen. But it doesn't stop there. Beyond the parallax are special effects which far surpass any previous in the CV saga. It is in the Royal Chapel where your jaw will drop as you gaze at layers of clouds blowing forth or negotiate a polygonal church which swirls four-way seamlessly with light reflecting through onto the

COLOSSEUM





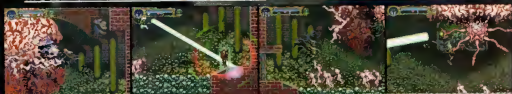
GROUND WATER VEIN



Castlevania is a huge game, so if you're thinking you've seen it all, or even most of it, in this preview, I'm happy to say you have not. We will of course, return with maps, tips, and in-depth strategies regarding major items, weapons and all the rest of the glorious parts that make Castlevania an ever-changing party 2D is back. Let's hope it's here to stay.



MORE CASTLEVANIA TO COME...



DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

1 OR PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - TBA



E. STORM
Give me six a year like this and I'll be the happiest man alive.



I was just as surprised as Takumi the first time I saw Riverhill's *OverBlood*. We imagined it would be a total *Resident Evil* rip-

off, but after playing it once, the comparisons ended. I mean, who would have expected this genre to go real time (as in real-time polygons) so soon. *OverBlood* has a powerful storyline and strong exploration elements, but the fully realized 3D environments require all kinds of skills—like platforming, fighting, etc. It's fair to say that *OverBlood* caught me off guard. EA's porting it over from Japan, so we thought we'd give you another look.

The first thing you'll notice about *OverBlood* is the amazing 3D engine. As opposed to *RE* (or *Perfect Weapon*, or *Time Commando*), *OverBlood* is shifting a playfield constructed entirely of polygons, not bit-maps or pre-renders. The scary thing is, and you might want to check out the screenshots now, sometimes the areas look so good I forget that



they're just texture-mapped polygons and actually see them as real environments. They can be viewed from almost any angle, and often the polygons will be layered within one another (such as objects within glass casings, windows, etc.) creating a dazzling effect. Many areas have that strange depth sensation, where you're walking into the screen and the environment suddenly seems to be a whole lot bigger than you thought.

OverBlood doesn't play as well as it looks (that would be something), but I can handle the problems. Cars, the main character, has really stiff control. And, as I've mentioned, *OverBlood* throws a little platforming action into the mix, so stiff control (flame jumping, slow response time) doesn't help. Thankfully, this type of game doesn't need perfectly accurate controls to play properly, but man, it would've been nice!

Either way, it's cool to see another Japanese title making its way stateside. Although I have yet to see how well the voice and text translation was handled by EA, I'm sure they'll do a nice job, as always.

Once we get the final, I'll be here with the review. G

OverBlood

P
PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - RIVERHILL SOFTWARE

OF PLAYERS - 1

PUBLISHER - ELECTRONIC ARTS

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - APRIL



GLITCH
HAND ME THAT
TOE YAO,
WILL YA?

BLOW DOORS OR BLOW CHOW!

**FEATURES:**

- 25+ cars to choose from
- Race in either direction on 5 different tracks
- Includes original Pikes Peak Hill Climb
- 12 different camera angles
- Build and design your own tracks using the first-of-its-kind track editor
- Design your own car, tires, suspension, color and more!
- 1 or 2 player action

The logo for Peak Performance, featuring the word "PEAK" in a large, stylized, metallic font with a 3D effect, and the word "PERFORMANCE" in a smaller, bold, italicized font below it. The background is a dark, textured surface.



THE

**PILES PEAK
HILL CEMENT**



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It would seem that Sony's PlayStation has been around long enough and reached a high enough level of market penetration that more interesting and experimental games are reaching store shelves. *Psychosis' Sentient* is one such game.

In *Sentient*, you take on the role of Gorillit Sherova. On your way to Space Station Icarus, your ship crash lands in its docking bay (which is nicely detailed in the intro), and you are in a race against time as the station's orbit decays and is pulled towards the corona of the sun. From here, your adventure begins and you soon find out that all is not as it appears on the seemingly doomed space station.



I suppose one could describe *Sentient* as a science fiction RPG. There are things to puzzle over and people to talk to. And these are some strange looking people indeed. All of the characters are full three dimensional models with some insane looking faces mapped onto the head polys. As bizarre as it looks, it's also quite cool as the characters have the

PSYGNOSIS TAKES INTERACTION TO A NEW LEVEL!

sentient



ability to emotify by slight changes in their facial expressions. In fact, you yourself have this ability. As you interact with the characters, a small representation of your face appears in the lower left hand corner of the screen allowing you to alter your expression between varying degrees of happy or angry.

Most elaborate, however, is the system allowing the player to speak to the inhabitants of Icarus Station. By selecting different bits of sentences from a menu, a relatively complex and specific statement or question can be constructed. The combination of your facial expressions and the enhanced query and declaration system allow for new level of "real life" conversation hitherto unknown to the likes of the PlayStation.

In the end however, all those accoutrements mean nothing if the game isn't easy fun to play. I'm as big a critic of the shortened attention span of late twentieth-century society as the next like-minded individual, but the pacing of this game can be quite slow at times. Perhaps this would seem less of a problem if the settings of the game were more diverse. Basically, be prepared to do a lot of walking along a lot of similar looking corridors. Indeed, aside from different colored lighting, all corridors look basically the same. There are, however, some nicely detailed rooms and there is only a hit of texture warping when you get too close.

Still, once you get into it, the story is quite engaging. And you do get a feeling of really talking to people through the well-developed speech system and recurring characters. Thankfully, there is also incentive to play more than once as multiple paths lead to multiple endings. I respect Psychosis' effort to try something new. While not totally successful, in my opinion, it still impresses. If you can look past the lack of action, you'll more than likely find yourself completely immersed in the story, trying to figure out what to do next to save the station and solve other mysteries aboard Icarus. Oh, and don't do that with your face. It might stay that way. **SD**



DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS
PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS
FRAMAE - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



SUBSTANCE D
YOUR FACE MIGHT
STAY THAT WAY!

WCW VS THE WORLD



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wrestling games..." EGM '97



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Edy Guerrero



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RALLY CROSS

Okay, time to get dirty. *Rally Cross* takes you off-road racin' like nothin' else! This game keeps me playin' for hours on end, which is a rare thing these days. To put it plainly: This game's a blast!

The first thing you'll notice (after you've turned off the eighties-sounding music) is the incredible graphics. From the flares of the arena lights in the stadium course and the snow falling in the alpine course, to the awesome lighting you'll see (not to mention the leaves you'll kick up) while motoring through the English countryside in the garden course, this game is gorgeous.... The frame rate's excellent, too, and there's virtually no pop-up. Look closely, and you can actually see the driver and passenger in every vehicle!

The sound effects, as well, are top-notch. Every bump and jump is accompanied by an amazing creak or groan (at least), and you'll really appreciate the sploosh of the mud or small stream you'll inevitably find yourself traversing. The music, however (as mentioned earlier), leaves something to be desired....

The toughest part of this game (judging by the general response here at GameFan), has to be the control. The four wheel, independent sus-

pension makes for some bizarre bounces, and learning every dip and bump on the courses is a must. At first, you'll spend a lot of time upside down, bangin' the L2 and R2 buttons, trying to flip yourself back over. If you are easily frustrated, stay away from *Rally Cross*, or you'll go broke replacing shattered PS controllers.

With six courses, three variations of each, and two directions, you've effectively got thirty-six different tracks to choose from, although you start with only three. Beating various types of seasons will open up the rest, and you'll eventually have twenty (yes, twenty!) different four-wheelers from which to choose. Also, after Normal, Head-On, and Mixed seasons have been beaten, you'll get to try your hand at the one of the most frustratingly fun modes of play I've ever seen: the Suicide mode, in which your three opponents race the track in the opposite direction. This makes for some spectacular crashes, but winning a Suicide season at the Pro level is extremely difficult.

All in all, a great game from Sony Interactive, with plenty of challenge and depth for the ninja gamers out there, and plenty of fun for the occasional gamer, too. I haven't had this much fun since *Jet Moto*! If you're a fan of unusual racers, I highly recommend *Rally Cross*. **R**



HERE'S AN AMAZING LOT OF DIFFERENT RALLY VEHICLES IN RALLY CROSS! ONLY THE ELITE OF HARD-CORE RALLYING YOU WILL FIND TOURISTS! BEHIND THE WHEELS OF THIS GAME YOU'LL FIND FOUR-WHEELERS ON THE END, TOO! ONLY, IF I CAN GET THEM!



DEVELOPER - SONY INTERACTIVE

3 OF PLAYERS - 1-4

PUBLISHER - SONY

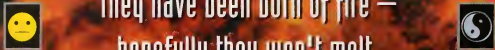
DIFFICULTY - AAAAAHHH!

FORMAT - EG

AVAILABLE - NOW



REBUS
NO WOMPS
ALLOWED!



They have been born of fire —
hopefully they won't melt.



Developed and published by

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R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - STUDIO E

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

PUBLISHER - PLAYMATES

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - APRIL



E. STORM
THE MOST FUN
YOU'LL EVER HAVE
ON 2 WHEELS...
WITHOUT LEAVING
HOME.

Tweaked, tuned, and ready for your approval, VMX Racing, the first PS motocrosser, is ready for action.

Six tracks and four teams made the final cut in which you can choose practice, two-player, or circuit modes. In the much needed and thankfully provided practice phase of VMX you'll master the varied courses which range from the super tight, exhibited in the two stadiums (New Orleans And Anaheim), to the wide open spaces of Orlando, New England, The Pacific Northwest, and San Jose.

Without intensive course dissection you'll spend the bulk of your race day face down. Partly because the control is ultra-touchy. In order to make tight hairpins do-able the designers have inserted very precise steering increments. Touch the D-Pad slightly and the rider's trajectory changes dramatically, hold it down and hit the throttle and you can turn on a dime. Since each course is made up essentially of twisting terrain it is required that you thoroughly memorize each track and its nuances. This is of maximum importance, because not only will hitting even the slightest off-course sprite crash you but the loose terrain will slow you down considerably. Should you fall behind, which is easy (crash

three times on the 1st lap and you may as well reset) in VMX, the pack will quickly pass as they stay pretty tight throughout the first lap. Bring the holeshot and hold the lead through a lap and a half and you'll get some breathing room. The camera distance you choose (from 4) also has a profound impact on the control, so practice with

each, find the one you like and then get to know each track.

Once you've achieved oneness with the control crank the tunes and get ready for some serious racing. Though totally unforgiving, VMX is a gas to see and play. Once you enter the zone you'll find the racing action some of the most intense around. Not only are the

spends high but coupled with the rugged guitar riffs of Tommy X, the combo effect is like a testosterone elevator.

VMX's few flaws lie mainly in the



Split the screen two ways and enter heated 2 player competition. The frame rate goes chug-a-lug, but it's still a kick.



Indoors, Super Cross is an exercise in precision, laced with tight turns and gnarly jumps...

Outdoors, things are more spread out, but equally challenging... if not more so.



At times huge objects are forgiving while seemingly invisible ones crash you (stay ON the track). Also disheartening is that the riders don't put their foot out around corners; standard body english when negotiating tight corners. Additionally, the throttle control is weird. The bikes don't have distinctive gear changes, but rather moan rather than rattle 2-stroke sound. Only push provides howl and another 'burst'. I just used burst to slow down and hammer it to turn sharply or, dart to clear the triples or zip through a tight turn. The 2-phys. mode is a nice feature, although it slows down the action considerably, which is almost welcome. Overall, VMX isn't perfect but its damn good and remains in my eyes, the best MX game to date. Until Yu Suzuki decides to get dirty it will likely stay that way.



Cool! I can watch my every move in replay. Look at me go! Wheeeeee!

Check out the diamond vision! (For the folks in the cheap seats)



It was nothing really. Now show me the money!

VANDAL HEARTS

Sukoden continues to be a best seller in the US, and *Final Fantasy VII* is a runaway (understatement of the year) hit in Japan. RPGs are back! Unfortunately, if you don't play imports, and you live in North America, you're probably used to slim pickin's, high prices, and bad translations. Alas, there is hope! CD-based systems make the price-point negligible, and translations can be completed in a few short months—if not sooner (*Wild Arms*, for example, is a quicky). The translation teams are getting better too; way better. "Engrish" is pretty much a thing of the past, and most translators finally have a clue when it comes to tasteful humor, strong writing, and good box and instructions artwork. Time to dig into Konami's latest translation, the

strategy RPG *Vandal Hearts*. Skipping the import *Vandal Hearts* turned out to be a smart move. The storyline is good, really good. In a strategy-type game, this is so important. The translators have chosen wisely, holding back on the dumb humor, and emphasizing the drama and action. In *Vandal*



Hearts, you play the role of Ash Lambert, leader of the Defense Special Force, a crack merc division of the Ishtarian army. Sinister politicians decide that the government must rule by the sword, and the army becomes a crazed militia force. Despite his sworn allegiance to the army, Ash cannot allow his tyrannical superiors to continue their blood-reign over the population. 15 years earlier, his father was forced to make the same decision, as the Ishtarian government sought to dominate, not govern, their people. He fought valiantly, but was

Eleni

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER: KJ27

PUBLISHER: KONAMI

FORMAT: CD

OF PLAYERS: 1

AUTHORITY: INDEPENDENT

PRICE: \$49.95

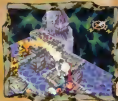
GLITCH

RPG gods? Yes
Nick, Yes!



Ash





eventually cut down in battle. The government covered their tracks with lies, and the Lambert name became synonymous with treason for many years. And so, Ash must decide: Should he simply follow orders to avoid suffering the same legacy of humiliation? Or should he infiltrate the corrupt government, and put an end to the senseless bloodshed? He's the good guy, so go figure. You can have the story all to yourself when you pick-up your own copy of *VH*, for now, it's on to gameplay (beautiful, perfect gameplay).

Vandal Hearts has every gameplay element I



First Suikoden, now this... Konami = RPG gods!



could ever need in a strategy game, without being overly complex. In battle, moving your troops is accomplished *Shining Force*-style (flashing strips), indicating how far you can move, or how far away missile attacks can strike. You can check out anyone's (good or evil) movement, anytime, by simply clicking on them. The multi-level battlefields affect movement rates (going uphill, through swampy land, etc.), but certain characters maneuver these conditions better than others. In other words, you have to play the environments as hard as you'd play the enemies. Another strategic factor: Counter-attacks.

Every time somebody attacks, their victim is allowed an automatic return-hit. This works into the movement strategy, 'cause if you let the enemies surround you, not only will all primary blows hit, but every counter-attack as well (big pain!). Do you see the synergy of play-mechanics? It's perfect. Battles are so logic-driven, so second-nature, I guarantee you'll be personalizing your tactics at every turn.

Vandal Hearts also has generally good music, great polygonal graphics (the texture art is nice), and quick loading times. Best of all, there's an in-battle save that allows you to come back to the exact same spot, mid-battle, anytime. Anyway, I've been a strategy RPG player for years and years and I implore you to trust these final words: *Vandal Hearts* is the most enjoyable strategy game I've played in quite a while. It's also one of the best PS games available (nice one Konami, you rule!).

Vandal Hearts screams "BUY ME!"

Clint

G

Diego



TAIL of the SUN

WILD PURE, SIMPLE LIFE

Tail of the Sun is a first for Sony for a number of reasons. It is one of the first so-called 'alternative' games to be released on the PlayStation, one of the first hold moves for Sony (i.e. you don't gun down tanks or wrestle with The Kwon Do experts in this title) and definitely the first almost exclusively featuring cave-people. Now, the Japanese punter may fork out numerous Yen for odd and compelling gaming experiences like this, but the more conservative US gamer? Well, Sony is giving you the chance to change your attitude and play more than the usual array of PlayStation console titles with this offering. And after days of constant evolving, I'm extremely happy that they did.

Forget your pre-conceived ideas about video games; Artdink is about to show everyone outside of Japan just how unique, fresh and exciting ideas can be translated onto silicon. With the previous (and undoubtedly excellent and trippy) *Aquantank's Holiday* under their belt, Artdink has travelled to the next realm of undiscovered video-gaming and brought us *Wild, Pure, Simple Life: Tail of the Sun*. From the very moment the cave paintings start to dance and the tribal drums begin, you know you're on your way to a whole new gaming

experience. A suitably savage opening, full of vibrant colors and imagery, gives way to revealing the task at hand: this is the first cavewoman simulation! No, don't turn the page just yet, ye of little faith; read on and find out why this gets an unequivocal Hambleton recommendation.

First you choose your knuckle-dragger (either male or female), then walk, run and leap about a prehistoric landscape on a desperate mission to evolve! This hyper-cool idea leads to a weird and wonderful romp around a detailed (not to mention almost limitless) 3D landscape. There's trees! And flowers! And monkeys! And mind-altering effects! Then you'll find your cave-person's statistics; how fast they'll run, attack, breathe underwater and even think, all of which you'll need to survive... and multiply!

You'll wander to northern tundras, search through caverns, drag yourself through sweltering deserts and sleep at the most inopportune moments, all in the name of tribe progression. Of course, as you wander, without any clue at all why you're here, you'll run into all kinds of fruit, rocks and various flora and fauna... all of which can be eaten. That's right. This adventure may be about exploration and bludgeoning apocryphal monkeys to death, but also

R
REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - ART DINK

PUBLISHER - SONY

FORMAT - CD

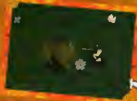
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - APRIL



CHIEF
HAMBLETON
WOMEN HAVE BIG
POUNTY STICKS!



about filling your rapidly expanding stomach with all kinds of tasty/poisonous plants and berries (don't try this at home, kids!).

So, you'll spend an hour or seven (time simply flies when you play this!) simply jogging around your world, curious at the pretty lights in the sky, weird-colored animals and strange bursts of techno music when you enter different zones, and then you'll plunge into the sea and drown. Ooops. But no matter, because there's a virtually limitless supply of mutated offspring (some much more scary than others) to take your initial wanderer's place. So, you'll magically be transported back to your village, another Cave-person will descend from the sky, and another exploration begins.



After this has gone on, you'll begin to become more adept at killing, finding spears, tackling the bigger beasts in the game (Purple texture-mapped hippos? "Hai! Me have big pointy stick!" SPLITCH!!) and search for mammoths. And then the dawn of realization will hit you: You're on a quest for mammoth bones! And not just a couple of tusks, mind, but a huge tower of bones stretching from the village square up to the sun (itself! Aha! *Toil of the Sun!*) Yes, it's all beginning to fit together now...



Yes, there's angular polygon monsters and some limited polygon pop-up in the horizon, but the sheer peacefulness and strangeness of this title had me hooked for days at a time. There's simply so much to explore as your tribe becomes more and more proficient, that you'll go from a skeptic to a full-fledged *Tail of the Sun* fanatic like me, constantly on the look-out and actually living the *Wild, Pure, Simple Life*. Novel, in-depth, very relaxing and fun; the best caveman simulation ever! Just don't become too attached to your caveman, okay? Well done to Sony for giving this the US release it deserves and who knows, perhaps *Porappo and Ropper* could be next...



CH

MECHWARRIOR2

31ST CENTURY COMBAT

THE PC SMASH MAKES A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO THE PLAYSTATION!



I was curious as to how Activision was going to convert MechWarrior 2 to the home platforms. In its original PC form it was a complex action/strategy simulator with the emphasis placed firmly on

strategy. Would the PS version retain the same deep, tactical gameplay? Well, in a word, no.

In order to cater to the 'shallow' console market, Activision has re-jigged the MechWarrior formula and switched the emphasis from strategy to action. The controls have been simplified (a necessity given PC MW2's reliance on keyboard commands) and the pace has been upped, with more enemy mechs per mission and the addition of arcade style power-ups like Stealth, Speed and Invincibility to give the game a more

traditional shoot-'em-up feel. Has this shift in balance worked? Well, kind of...

As with the PC original your objective in MW2 is to rise up through the ranks of your chosen clan by successfully completing

the missions in your campaign. There are 48 missions in total, evenly split between the two clans (Wolf and Falcon), with 16 all new missions exclusive to the home consoles. All the PC missions have been modified to include more action and destruction than their PC counterparts, while the console exclusive missions feature some nice twists on the usual MW2 objectives.

Before you enter battle you get to choose from a wide range of mechs (all taken from the BattleMech universe), each balanced in terms of physical attributes and



R
REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - QUANTUM FRACT

PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2 WITH

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY '97



KNIGHTMARE
MECHWARRIOR,
ARCADE STYLE!



weapons, and you'll find that certain Mechs are more effective on particular missions than others. While selecting your Mech, you also get to choose which weapons you want to group together to fire simultaneously, although the more power you lump into one blast, the quicker your mech overheats.

Technically, Activision has done a good job of replicating the PC's aesthetics. The graphics are ok—nothing special, but not too bad either. Even though the mechs are pretty basic in terms of number of polygons, their actual design is cool, and the lighting effects are a nice bonus. Just don't expect your PS to replicate the crisp hi-res visuals of the PC. Be content with a decent frame rate! A mention must also go to the new sound effects and music, which are excellent, and really contribute to the overall experience.

The control system actually translates surprisingly well to the PS pad, with every button employed for a particular function. It's been simplified from the PC mouse/keyboard set up, but the feel of piloting a huge war machine remains intact. Just like the PC, your mech can't strafe or make quick maneuvers—dodging is impossible—and ultimately it's more like a simulation than an action game. Despite



FORGET THE STRATEGY! BLAST ENEMY MECHS APART IN FULL-BLOWN FUTURE WAR!

narios go some way towards spicing things up a little, but no matter what your mission objective, it always comes to down to the same old thing: shooting mechs.

I hope that doesn't all sound too negative. I had a lot of fun with *MW2* and if you're a fan of the genre, so will you. It's a good conversion and certainly the best of its kind currently available for the PS (way better than *Krazy Ivan*). It's not perfect, not by a long shot, but if you're willing to put up with a few basic flaws you'll discover a sophisticated and engaging mech sim that should more than satisfy any PS owners hungry for mech combat. **K**



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AVKGF

An anime-style illustration for the video game Wild Arms. The background is a rocky, mountainous landscape under a cloudy sky. In the upper right, a large, close-up profile of a young man with spiky blue hair and a green bandage on his forehead. He is wearing a red, torn shirt. In the lower center, a young man with long, wavy brown hair and a slight smile, wearing a brown jacket over a green shirt. To his left, a small figure of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a yellow cloak with a red sash and a blue skirt. A small green frog-like creature is perched on the brown-haired man's shoulder.

Sony and
Media Vision's
RPG
masterpiece
comes to the
U.S...

WILD ARMS



It's finally beginning to look like the American video game market understands RPGs, thanks in no small part to Sony. Look at the PlayStation's track record: The US has only missed two major RPGs, *Arche the Lad I* and *II*. (Wait, make that three; we missed *Abolopolis*.) But trust me, you didn't want it in the first place, that Japanese PlayStation-owners got. Thankfully, Sony is continuing this newly established tradition (quite ironic, the Japanese edition of this game came out in late December) with *Wild Arms*.

Wild Arms takes place in the land of Filgaia, a country with rich folklores describing a race of giants who were destroyed by an ancient metal-swinned



giant. Supposedly, these events took place over 1000 years ago. These tales were thought to be mere legends, until archaeologists dug began to unearth incredibly advanced technology like giant mechanical giants and weapons known as ARMs, or Ancient Rune Machines. Sierker's ARMs turn up, but only a tiny percentage of the population can synchronize with them. One of these people is the 15-year-old Rudy, one of the adventures the people of Filgaia call "Dream Chasers." He, along with fellow adventurers Jack Van Bunsco, and Cecilia, the girl who was his childhood friend, are about to embark on a journey that will change the face of their world and force them to learn truth about their personal histories they'd just as soon forget...

Wild Arms is a high-technology, fast-RPG, but it borrows from all sorts of genres. Action-RPG elements like bombs, wire frames, and whirling Zords, out of the future. It's had battles from *Final Fantasy* (in fact, this combat system is as close to FFVII's as it gets), a three-party members' limit, attacks, summon spells... All this adds up to an extremely easy-to-play and much more potent RPG engine than what we're used to. Playing *Wild Arms* is just, well, fun. You're not constrained to normal over-the-top RPG controls... You can dash, jump from high places, and have lots of movement with all three characters. Good.

WILD ARMS KRAZY KORNER

Wild Arms is a fantastically great game and all, but it contains one interesting little "easter egg" for you. If you can't tell what's happening below our intrepid hero Rudy chooses a chicken when he picks his partner in his first prompt. What's his partner? A MUSH-ROOM. Does that not bother you? We can't teach our children to go around hunting food just to give shiny, psychedelic treats. Protest! Start a letter-writing campaign! Notify your senator!





As hey, the "Goods" system. As has been said, modern Japanese GameFan, every modern Japanese RPG has to have a "Goods" system. I have gotten rather tired of late ("Tri-Mode No. 1" is a good example) regarding the "Goods" system. In concept, it's a system where you can use any item you want to use. For example, you can use bombs, a roller dash, and a roller dash, which allows you to see the towns and cities. I have much more to say about it.



ARMS



RPGs. I've had this idea for a while now, but I've been too busy with other projects to get it done. I've been thinking about it for a long time, and I've been looking for a way to make it happen. I've been thinking about it for a long time, and I've been looking for a way to make it happen. I've been thinking about it for a long time, and I've been looking for a way to make it happen.

Swagman

CORE
WANTS TO
INVADE
YOUR
DREAMS!

GameFan first made the public aware of Core's Swagman way back in Volume 3, Issue 3. Yes, that was quite a while ago, but the game is finally nearing completion. And even though many moons have passed, the graphic prowess of this title still cannot be overlooked.

In Swagman, you take control of Zack or Hannah in their quest to defeat the vile Swagman and rescue Dream Fly, protector of the happy dreams. Travel through seven stages of rendered scenery swapping

characters and doing your best to make it through

unscathed. The game really starts to get interesting once you reach the DreamWorld. Here, your characters transform into DreamBaasts and take on a whole new set of powers.

This being a preview, I won't go too in-depth into the actual play mechanics. What I saw looked fairly basic, but was well done. You have the ability to jump, pick up items, swing your flashlight, etc. You're character doesn't zoom around on screen, but it does control well. So I have faith in Core to deliver the gameplay goods. They've generally kept me quite pleased in the past, so I can only hope for the same here. At the very least however, I have seen how this game looks, and it's very impressive.

H
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C
K



DEVELOPER - CORE

OF PLAYERS - 1

PUBLISHED - EBROS

BIFTECHTY - N/A

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - 2ND QUARTER '97

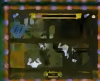


SUBSTANCE D
The Swagman
canon!



Graphically, the look is stellar. Take the shadows, for instance. They actually move with your character and flow over objects based on the position of the light source. Add to this, mega animation, color, and effects and you have a fine looking game on your hands.

Hopefully Core will imbue this title with gameplay to match its outstanding visu-



els. It certainly looks original and the cool dream premise reminds me of that other surreal masterpiece, Sonic Team's *NIGHTS*. Core certainly has a fine track record thus far, and they've been working on *Swegmen* for a long time. Let's hope they spent that time wisely. If so, look for a glowing review as soon as a final version is available. **SD**



BALL BLAZER CHAMPIONS



Back in 1985, LucasFilm Games introduced the original *Ball Blazer*. Developed for the Atari and Commodore platforms, *Ball Blazer* was one of the most advanced games of its time. Just imagine: It's 1985, you're staring off years of intense 4k gaming (I was anyone in my little Colecovision universe), and a futuristic first-person blaster comes along out of nowhere. Players toiled over the ultra-fast-paced 3D experience, vying to obtain the coveted rank of "Master Blazer."

Now, LucasArts hopes to re-capture the breakthrough classic, with the all-new *BallBlazer Champions* for the PS.

Champions takes place on an artificial asteroid created expressly for the Interstellar BallBlazer Championship. The IBC brings in competitors from across the galaxy—pilots who command powerful hovercraft-like vehicles called "rotafolls." For IBC competition, we've

SPLIT-SCREEN MODE FOR TWO PLAYERS!



certain the object of the game was simple: Score more goals than your opponent. Friendly sportsmanship! Not so. The *BallBlazer* universe is perpetually at war, and this tournament replaces the bloodshed with sport every two weeks every year. Why do they continue to fight? Nobody knows. The network executives need it, the fans love it, and the politicians watch on helplessly.

So how do you play? You choose one of 8 champions, customize your rotafoll, and enter the competition. The ball is



FIRE THE BURNING HOT "PLASMOID" INTO THE GOAL! IT'S GOOD!!!!



shot" and special dodges). You're in a giant 3D stadium each time you fight, so learning the layout and practicing your maneuvers is essential.

We haven't had a chance to sit down and take this game apart yet, but more in-depth gameplay information should be coming soon. If everything comes together, *BallBlazer Champions* should be a heck of a comeback classic. **G**



FIGHT ALIEN CHAMPIONS VIE FOR THE TITLE OF MASTER BLAZER!!



P
PREVIEW



PLAYSTATION

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2

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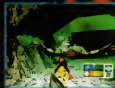
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EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!: BLACK-OP'S UNDERWATER EXTRAVAGANZA: TREASURES OF THE DEEP!

In *Treasures of the Deep* you play the part of Jack

Rungan, and ex-Navy Seal turned rogue mercenary who travels the globe on a never-ending search for undersea fortunes. By retrieving treasures you can make money to upgrade your vehicle with new weapons and equipment, which you will need in future operations to stop terrorist Simon Black from detonating the world's undersea fault lines. Your quest will take you to locations like the Bermuda Triangle, the undersea caves of the Yucatan Peninsula, the Mariana Trench, the icy caverns of Antarctica and the shark-infested waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Cool.



ABES ADVENTURE • ODD WORLD INHABITANTS/GTE • ADVENTURE



One of the most unique, and graphically superb adventures perhaps ever, is *Odd World Inhabitants*, ambitious *Abes Adventure*. The game goes as far as having its own language called "Game Speak," has generous parallax and some truly comical overtones. It's deep as well; real deep. With any luck we'll have the game in our hands for a preview next month.



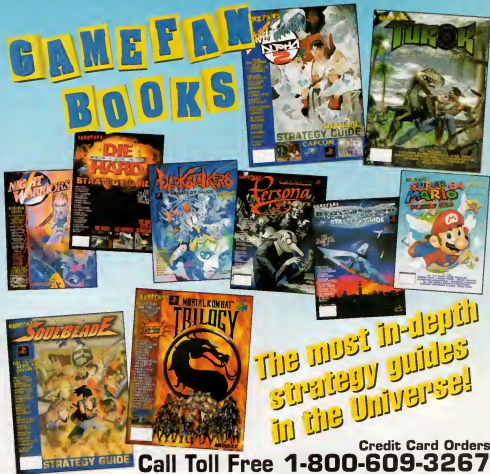
HEAVEN'S GATE • ATLUS • FIGHTING • AVAIL. NOW JPN./US TBA



Atlus enters the 3D fighting fray with *Heaven's Gate*, an original fighter which introduces 8 all-new characters. Apart from the typical assortment of options (rounds, life gauge, etc.), *HG* also allows one to alternate the ring-out feature on or off, and includes training and survival (or "Tough Guy") modes. The gameplay is ultra *Virtua Fighter*-esque, including FPKA, a block button, and two-button throws (as well as similar characters). Despite the borrowed names, *Heaven's Gate* offers great 3D fps action within highly detailed 3D arenas and backgrounds, as well as a soundtrack well suited to the Oriental feel. *HG* has yet to be announced for a US release, but it seems inevitable... either way, we'll keep you posted.



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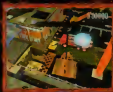
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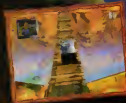
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RARE IS PREPARING TO BULLDOZE YOUR SENSES IN SPECTACULAR STYLE!!

BLAST CORPS



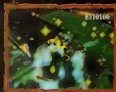
In the 21st century, a computer-controlled chemical carrier has malfunctioned and headed off course into a populated area. The chemicals being transported are highly unstable, and should the carrier collide with any obstacles, it will explode with the force of a small nuclear weapon. And that would be bad. As a member of the titular Blast Corps—a crack team of demolition experts—it's your job to ensure that the carrier gets a smooth ride through each of the game's 60+ levels...by whatever means necessary.

Each level contains a set number of vehicles dotted around the landscape (from a total of around 50) and you must use these vehicles appro-

propriately to clear a safe path for the carrier. There are eight main demolition vehicles (each with a different technique for destroying buildings) and around 50 more 'assisting' vehicles, each with their own utilitarian function. For instance, freight trains and cranes can be used to transport other vehicles to inaccessible areas, while cars and vans are often the fastest way to get from point A to point B. There's even the A-team van in there somewhere!

Blast Corps is structured around three main global 'stages,' each containing a set number of levels that must be completed before you can progress to the next stage. There are around 60 levels in total (includ-

ROBOTS CAN SMASH CONCRETE WITH EASE! THREE TOUGH DROIDS TO CHOOSE FROM!





POWERSLIDE THE DUMP TRUCK FOR GREATER DAMAGE! THIS VEHICLE IS TOUGH GOING!

ing a vast number of secret and bonus levels) and the further you get into the game, the more complex your task becomes. Not only do you have to destroy buildings but you have to hit a lot of crates, bridge rivers, transport TNT crates to demolish particularly stubborn structures, and all the while the carrier is closing in.

However, clearing a path for the chemical carrier isn't the only mission in *Blast Corps*. Once a level has been successfully completed you can return to it at any time to attempt one of the secondary objectives. Destroy buildings to earn extra money, or search the landscape for hidden vehicles, Radiation Dispersion Units (which open sub-levels) and six hidden scientists who unlock a secret that's 'out of this world.' These secrets add an extra layer of depth to the game and keep you playing long past the point of completion.

The graphics are impressive, as you would expect from Rare. The objects themselves aren't that exceptional (the pastel colors seem a bit out of place) but the explosions are cool, the vehicles move realistically and the whole landscape is convincingly portrayed with little slow-down and no clipping. You couldn't do this on any other system. The sound

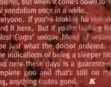
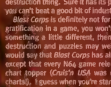
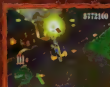


NEW TACTICS ARE REQUIRED TO SUCCEED WITH THE DUNE BUGGY!

effects are also appropriate enough, while the music is a strange mixture of '70s funk, ambient and bare trance.

But on to the million dollar question: How does the game actually play? Well, I think opinions are going to vary over this one folks, but personally, I really enjoyed *Blast Corps*. I admit a few of the vehicles are very too difficult to control (such as the Back Lash), and the game can be fraught with frustration, but overall, I got a real kick out of the whole thing. Sure it has its problems, but when it comes down to it, you can't beat a good bit of industrial vandalism once in a while.

Blast Corps is definitely not for everyone. If you're looking for serious gratification in a game, you won't find it here. But if you're looking for something a little different, then *Blast Corps*' unique blend of weapons, destruction and puzzles may well be just what the doctor ordered. I would say that *Blast Corps* has all the indications of being a sleeper hit, except that every N64 game released here these days is a guaranteed chart topper (Cruis'n USA was complete poo and that's still on the charts). I guess when you're starving, anything tastes good. — K



SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE VEHICLES TO CONTINUE THE CARNAGE! IT'S A BLAST!!



DEVELOPER - RARE

PUBLISHER - NINTENDO

FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - APRIL



KNIGHTMARE
An original game is a RARE thing indeed.



DARK RIFT

If there's one genre the N64 isn't exactly known for, it's 3D fighting games. (Actually, are there any genres it is known for...?) Besides Hudson's *Dual Heroes*, which hasn't even been announced for an American release, there's nothing. Enter Vic Tokai's *Dark Rift*, a game that was originally announced for the PlayStation but was scrapped due to... shall we say... *differences* with Sony over a lovely little game called *Criticom*.

Though we haven't actually seen the N64 version in motion (at last year's E3 we saw the game running on a PlayStation at 60fps, with motion blurs and multi-layer parallax backgrounds... it was gorgeous, to say the least,) Vic Tokai boasts that it will bestow upon us "blazing frame rates, optical motion capture animation and intense fog mood enhancing." Let's hope that the fog in *Dark Rift* is more, uh, mood enhancing than in other N64 games...

Dark Rift features eight playable characters, two bosses, *Tekken*-like ten-hit combos, side-steps, chain combos, and *KI*-style combo breakers. Little else, such as specifics about what type of special move motions are in the game, is known. We should have a hands-on preview of *Dark Rift* sometime soon. **NR**

P
PREVIEW

NINTENDO 64


DEVELOPER - HUNTER
PUBLISHER - VIC TOKAI
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - N/A
AVAILABLE - N/A



NICK ROX
From the makers of *criticom!* joeyah!

IN DEVELOPMENT

**SPECIAL
REPORT**



Robotron X for the Nintendo 64 is well under way by the same team that brought us the stellar PS version: Player One. We recently made our way to sunny Santa Monica to see what gamers could expect from this classic blaster on the most powerful console in the known universe. As of 2/24 the game was about 70% complete with all of the graphics and model designs finished, but yet to be placed into the actual game. The N64 version will feature 200 levels, like the PS version, but, according to designer George Weising, it will feature a few things not found on the PS version as well. These "extras" include a first-person perspective mode, improved enemy AI, dual-analog controller mode (see picture, below), music which

ROBOTRON

increasingly accelerates toward the end of each level, and best of all, the final level features a yet unseen end boss!

The fourteen techno tracks (completely recomposed from the PS game) use 6-8 sound channels, and at this point, it's already the best we've heard from the N64. As expected, the player's level status, controller configurations and option settings can all be saved to memory card. A joit pack option may be added also, if the specs are relieved in time. If all goes well, we should be obtaining a preview copy of *Robotron X* for the next issue, as well as an interview with Player One, where we just may learn what they've got in the works following this amazing title.

The Enquirer

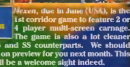


Pictured above: Left, a demonstration of the two-handed technique; Center, a demo shot of *Robotron X*; Right, a sample of rendered art, which may be used as the cover for the packaging.



PREVIEWS!

NINTENDO 64



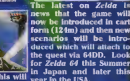
TITLE **HEXEN**
COMPANY **3D REALITY**
ETA **Q3 '96**
GENRE **3D ACTION**

Hexen, due in June (USA), is the 1st corridor game to feature 2 or 4 player multi-screen carnage. The game is also a lot cleaner graphically than its PS and SS counterparts. We should have a *bona fide* hands on preview for you next month. This great corridor game will be a welcome sight indeed.



TITLE **COCKROACH**
COMPANY **3D REALITY**
ETA **Q3 '96**
GENRE **3D ACTION**

Finally, some actual screens (as opposed to the mock ups we've been getting) of *Cockroach*. The engine looks very "It's-a-mee!" but the gameplay should be quite unique. Look for a more platform-oriented adventure. *GS* is due in Japan this May, with a US version probably around Christmas.



STARFOX

The next big event for the N64 is definitely *Starfox 64*. If the Nintendo 64's 3D capabilities are to be tested, this will be the ultimate testing ground. The game features "me-to" levels similar to the original along with "go anywhere" levels where you and the crew fight free of directional restraints. *Starfox 64* also features split-screen play for up to 4 players in battle mode and ground assaults. The game is 96 mega bits and blessed by Miyamoto and his crack squad of designers and artists. *Starfox* lands in Japan this April and here this June.

TITLE **STARFOX 64**
COMPANY **NINTENDO**
ETA **APRIL '96**
GENRE **SHOOTER**

The latest on *Zelda* is news that the game will now be introduced in cart form (124m) and then new scenarios will be introduced which will attach to the quest via 64DD. Look for *Zelda 64* this Summer in Japan and later this year in the USA.

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SATURN SECTOR

LUNACY

I can't tell you what a delight it is to see a game like this reach the shores of the red, white, and blue. It's almost as if an evil conspiracy has been bent on keeping the more esoteric and interesting Japanese games from our waiting hands. Somehow, Lunacy made it.

Some of you may recall seeing the Japanese version of this game (called Torico) a little while ago in the pages of GameFan. In the interim, the game has received a shiny new English voice track, allowing the game to be enjoyed by all English speaking humans of the world.

You play Fred, a poor soul who's memory was lost four years ago. Since then, you have been wandering from village to village searching for your true identity, along with the meaning of the strange crescent tattoo on your forehead. As Lunacy opens, you find yourself in a mysterious village known as Misty Town. You quickly discover that the only way you can leave Misty Town and regain your memory is by finding the ethereal City of Moons. So Lunacy begins.

In the tradition of Wario's inspired D, Lunacy is all streamlined FMV. In other words, you move around within the game world in spurts from one "hot" spot to the next. Of course, a level-of-control is removed from the player's hands, but the upshot of it is a beautifully realized and detailed environment—much more so than would be possible if it were all real time. Everything in life is a compromise of sorts, I suppose. But I can live with that, for the look and atmosphere of this game is just wonderful. Misty Town is lit in a melan-

choly dusk, the setting sun painting everything orange. The game is ever more breathtaking once you reach the City of Moons. Here the color palette is cool, with great, dreamlike bridges and pools of water. Even with the Saturn's lack of prowess with FMV (which is surprisingly well handled here), the game looks fantastic.

As far as the gameplay is concerned, there is less puzzle solving than D. It's mostly about finding items and then fusing the proper phases to use them. There's nothing terribly tricky or vexing; it's simply a matter of looking everywhere and speaking to everyone. Certain items won't appear unless a particular conversation has been triggered. This may stump you a couple of times.

In the music department, Lunacy benefits from a beautiful, delicately composed sound-track. As much as the actual look of the game, the music soaks the environment in atmosphere. It's a really great-sounding score that sets the mood of the game perfectly. As for the dubbing, the voice quality is fine, though the translation and readings are a bit odd at times. Bewel in phrases like,

"This town is a not farm. I'm getting the hell out of here, or, 'The name that they call me is Fred.'"

If you thought D was the bee's knees, Lunacy is right up your alley. The FMV is supremely well done, the music's gorgeous and the story is nice and surreal. On the other hand, you may not like FMV games, and if that's the case, you'll probably won't change your mind on Lunacy's behalf. Certainly it's not the kind of game you can play over and over. SD



**R
REVIEW**

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA OF JAPAN

OF PLAYERS - 1 PLAYER

PUBLISHER - ATLUS

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

FORMAT - 2 GDS

AVAILABLE - NOW



SUBSTANCE D
THE NAME THAT
THEY CALL ME
IS FRED.

NORSE BY NORSE WEST

THOSE WACKED-OUT VIKINGS ARE LOST AGAIN!!

I'm sure some or a lot of you remember the SNES and Genesis platform/puzzle game *Lost Vikings*. We're into the post-16-bit era now, and Interplay has seen fit to update one of their more popular titles into the 32-bit realm, with *Norse By Norsewest*. In case you've forgotten or never played the original, let me touch on the concept of the game. You alternate control between three little Vikings, each with differing skills and abilities. Erik can jump and dash, Olaf can shield, float, and shrink, and Baleog has weapons. So, by using the unique skills of the three Vikings, you must suss out some way to get them all to the level exit. Naturally, as you progress, the puzzles get more and more tricky to crack.

As would be expected, the graphics have been upgraded, though not as much as they could have been, considering the strength of the Saturn's 2-D abilities. Though the backgrounds are nicely colored and detailed, there is but one parallax I know the Saturn is capable of. To me of the deep parallax I know the Saturn is capable of. To my eyes, it doesn't look all that much better than some-thing like *Donkey Kong Country*, and that game had some pretty deep scrolling. But don't get the impression that I am at odds with this game. I'm merely pointing out that I feel the graphics could be of a little better quality, not that I am at odds with them. On the flip side, the musical sensations are sure to please. The music is nicely composed and fits the pacing of the game generally.

Interplay has generally had a good

bit's story with

and Norse game music, and Norse by Norsewest continues that tradition.

However, graphics aside, this game remains true to the original's formula, which means that it's addictive and fun. And, in an effort to add something new, there are now additional characters you get to control in certain levels. You still have three characters at your command, but one or more of the Vikings will be replaced by an animal player. There's the wolf, who has the ability to jump endlessly up walls and swipe at enemies, and the little dragon, who can fly for a short time (he gets tired, the poor little feller) and shoot fire.

If you liked the original *Lost Vikings*, you'll definitely get a kick out of this update, especially in two player co-op mode. The graphics won't blow you away and there isn't a whole lot new, but the puzzles will once again have you scratching your head. Anyone new to *Lost Vikings* will like this if they prefer to think rather than blast their way through a level. I say it's good fun.

SD



DEVELOPER - Bricom & Synapse

PUBLISHER - INTERPLAY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - APRIL '97



SUBSTANCE D

WERNY, HERNY, BERNY, SHERNY, MORK! MORK!

KONAMI'S CLASSIC HITS THE SATURN!

CONTRA

legacy of war

Some of my fondest gaming memories stem from my experience with the old NES *Contra*. Images of that game still flow freely throughout my synaptic pathways. We're a long way from 8-bit these days, and you would expect a 32-bit version of a classic NES side-scroller to be beyond awesome. By all rights, it should be. It would seem, however, that Konami dropped the ball on this one. If you were hoping for the classic *Contra* experience, be prepared to be a little disappointed.

Their first mistake in updating the classic *Contra* series was a fatal one. For some unfathomable reason, this game was not even developed in-house by Konami. It was instead farmed out to Appaloosa Software. Why such a hallmark of Konami's past would



he put into the hands of someone else will forever evade my intellectual grasp. It just shouldn't be.

Some of you may have played the PlayStation version that preceded this one. This is essentially the same game. The frame rate is a bit smoother, but the textures are of lower quality. The fact that I am even speaking of textures is the first tip-off that something is not right here. *Contra*, and the style of play that it encompasses, was never meant to be in 3D. I appreciate progress and all, but if Konami wanted to make a 3D ground-based shooter, they should have done something original instead of tarnishing the *Contra* name.

Still, I could accept a 3D *Contra* if it was incredibly well done, but this game comes nowhere near incredibly well done. Perhaps most maddening is the atrocious collision detection. Something that should be intuitive and enjoyable,

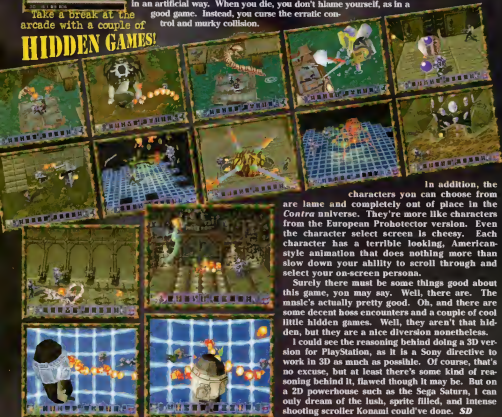




like jumping up to a platform, becomes an exercise in frustration. Couple the poor collision with the sloppy Joe control and you're in for a hair-pulling, controller-throwing, "great" time. And speaking of bad control, something else that should be intuitive, like strafing, is handled in a way as to cause even more frustration. Instead of holding one of the shoulder buttons to strafe, you are required to click it once to activate it and click it again to deactivate it. With bullets coming at you from all angles, this is not fun. Playing the game should be the challenge, not wrestling with the control. And while I'm on the subject of challenge, I must point out the extreme difficulty of this game. The *Contra* series has always been about being hard, but this one is hard in an artificial way. When you die, you don't blame yourself, as in a

good game. Instead, you curse the erratic control and murky collision.

Take a break at the arcade with a couple of **HIDDEN GAMES!**



In addition, the characters you can choose from are lame and completely out of place in the *Contra* universe. They're more like characters from the European Probotector version. Even the character select screen is cheesy. Each character has a terrible looking, American-style animation that does nothing more than slow down your ability to scroll through and select your on-screen persona.

Surely there must be some things good about this game, you may say. Well, there are. The music's actually pretty good. Oh, and there are some decent boss encounters and a couple of cool little hidden games. Well, they aren't that hidden, but they are a nice diversion nonetheless.

I could see the reasoning behind doing a 3D version for PlayStation, as it is a Sony directive to work in 3D as much as possible. Of course, that's no excuse, but at least there's some kind of reasoning behind it, flawed though it may be. But on a 2D powerhouse such as the Sega Saturn, I can only dream of the lush, sprite filled, and intense shooting scroller Konami could've done. **SD**



DEVELOPER - APPALDOSA

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

NO OF PLAYERS - CD

DIFFICULTY - HARD

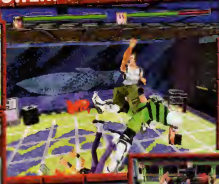
AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



SUBSTANCE D
Y' KNOW, IF YOU
CAN'T SAY SOME-
THING GOOD...

TWO-PLAYER BATTLE ACTION THROUGH A CAPTURED L.A. OFFICE TOWER! WELCOME TO THE PARTY, PAL!

FIGHT UNIQUE VILLAINS THROUGH 5 STAGES WITH MULTIPLE LEVELS!



INCREDIBLE FIGHT TECHNIQUES—OVER 1,000 CHARACTER ANIMATIONS! 30 DIFFERENT ENEMIES!

While, for the most part, 32-bit technology has meant a marked improvement in most game genres, there is one type of game that seems to have resisted the advance: the side scrolling beat-'em-up. I'm a big fan of the genre (*Final Fight* and *Streets Of Rage 2* rule), and it pains me that I can count the number of decent PS and Saturn-scrolling beat-'em-ups on one hand... with no fingers. It's a sad state of affairs when the 32-bit genre leader is the distinctly average *Batman Forever*.

able to include real-time cut scenes, and best of all, an interactive camera system that intelligently zooms and pans to frame the action. The overall aesthetic quality is highly impressive, and it really gives you the feeling that you're playing a 'grown up' beat-'em-up—sort of *Final Fight* meets *Virtua Fighter*.

DIE HARD Arcade

But wait! Hope is on the horizon (well, for Saturn owners at least). Sega has finally gotten around to releasing AM1's smash ST-V hit *Dynamite Deka* in the States, albeit under a new name: *Die Hard Arcade*. As with previous ST-V games, it's an arcade-perfect conversion (except for the CD loading), and as anyone who's played the coin-op will know, that's definitely good news.

So what makes *Die Hard Arcade* so special? Well, for one thing, it's 3D. Ok, so that's not that special, but I think it's a first for a beat-'em-up of this kind. Admittedly the polygon count per character isn't that high, but the environments are fully 3D, the textures are clean and there's never any slow-down, no matter how many enemies are on-screen (normally a lot!). Because of the polygon visuals, AM1 has been

The VF connection isn't just limited to the graphics

either. Some of *DH's* moves are taken directly from *VF* (e.g. Wolf's Giant Swing, Kage's uppercut) while the basic gameplay has a real VF feel. The recovery times and collision detection aren't as harsh as VF, but a lot of the moves are executed in a similar fashion—i.e., PPK-derivative combos as opposed to just furiously tapping the buttons.

At first *Die Hard Arcade* seems almost unreasonably difficult, but as with most AM games, delve a bit deeper and you'll soon discover that there's more depth than meets the eye. There are combos to be learned, throws to be perfected and mastering the basic mechanics of combat is a real challenge.



USE PUNCHES, KICKS, THROWS AND HEAVY ARTILLERY TO DEFEAT THE TERRORISTS!



But, hey, not that challenging. After all, *Die Hard* Arcade is a beat-'em-up, and beat-'em-ups are all about fun. It may take a bit longer to get into than your usual Capcom fist-fest, but the premise is still the same: pummel everyone! You and a friend face a seemingly un-ending barrage of thugs, ninjas, robots and gun-toting perps as you travel through a variety of cool environments in your bid to save the President's daughter. You're not just limited to your fists either: Literally anything you can see can be used as a weapon: furniture, brooms, broken bottles, pepper shakers, axes, swords, chairs, anything!! However, by far the



most effective weapons are the guns.

Now there have been beat-'em-ups with guns before but never anything quite this excessive. Whether it's a Beretta, an M&M, a rocket launcher or even an anti-tank gun (which really has no business being in a beat-'em-up), the feeling you get from mercilessly gunning down your enemy before they can even lay a finger on you is hugely satisfying. You can store up to five clips at once, and it's possible to complete whole sections of the game just by laying down some John Woo-style gunfire.

Die Hard Arcade is not perfect. The graphics are occasionally glitchy and more seriously, the whole experience is way too short. You can earn yourself almost unlimited credits by scoring on the accompanying 8-bit *Deep Scan* game (earning credits, now there's a thought), thus making it possible to blunder through the



COMBINE PUNCHES AND KICKS TO
CREATE POWERFUL NEW ATTACKS!
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CLOSE ON THE ENEMY AND USE THE GRAB ATTACK!
GET IN RANGE THEN EXECUTE A POWERFUL GRAB TECHNIQUE! 15 THROWS TO CHOOSE FROM!



whole game on your first go. Personally I enjoy seeing how far I can get on just one credit (like *Ranking Mode* from *Virtual Cop 2*), but if you're the kind of gamer who feels they've beaten a game once they've completed it, you'll probably want to look elsewhere.

Some good, solid, old school action. It's the best of its kind—a million times better than *Batman Forever* (brilliantly another ST-V game)—and a heaven send for beat-'em-up fans like myself. **K**

Skill, there's no denying that *Die Hard* Arcade represents a significant step forward for the scrolling beat-'em-up (even though it doesn't really scroll). AM1 has provided a fresh slant on a well-worn genre while at the same time delivering



KNIGHTMARE
A 'grown up' beat-'em up!

R
REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - 1ST QUARTER '97



WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING DEAD, A GUN IS AS CLOSE AS THE NEAREST VENDING MACHINE. BUT WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING DEAD AND YOU'RE NOT UP TO THE JOB YOU WANT A SCUD.



Scud

THE DISPOSABLE ASSASSIN™

Unless you frequent the intriguing world of underground comics, you've probably never heard of SCUD. A SCUD, by definition, is a disposable assassin (hence the title). If you want something dead but don't wanna get your hands dirty, you need only visit your local SCUD vending machine. As our story begins, Herschel, who's being held responsible for the mad robot SCUD calls 'JEFF' which is loose in the mannequin factory (it slams one kid into the ground and then slaps him bursting and gushing against the screen, then rips another in half), dispatches a SCUD to take care of business. This SCUD, however, has overridden its programming and has a will to live. Normally, a SCUD self-

Pavlov, Nathan Twist... even The Head of Jayne Mansfield... They all found SCUD and they all got killed.



R
REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA SOFT

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

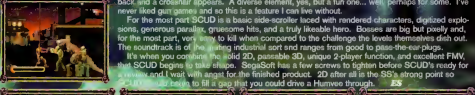
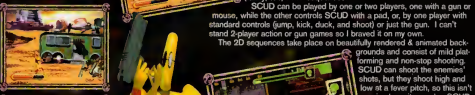
OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - MARCH



E. STORM
I could really use one of these SCUDs...



destroys after its 1st kill. But instead of killing its targets, this SCUD seriously wounds them and then keeps them alive on life support. Of course, this costs money, and so SCUD must offer his services as an assassin for hire, in order to stay alive.

Meanwhile, ASGARD (the evil corporation in our adventure) wants SCUD eliminated and so, our noodle-haired vixen (see intro shots opposite page) sends out the fearsome 'AM minus 2' to do away with the runaway robot. All of this is set up and maintained brilliantly throughout the game via some high-quality (funny, too) FMV sequences.

SCUD can be played by one or two players, one with a gun or mouse, while the other controls SCUD with a pad, or, by one player with standard controls (jump, kick, duck, and shoot) or just the gun. I can't stand 2-player action or gun games so I braved it on my own.

The 2D sequences take place on beautifully rendered & animated backgrounds and consist of mild platforming and non-stop shooting. SCUD can shoot the enemies' shots, but they shoot high and low at a fever pitch, so this isn't as simple as it sounds. SCUD can also swipe enemies at close range, which produces a slightly pixelly close

Poly-steroid armor and a month's battery supply... SCUD wants more life...

up encounter. When SCUD switches to the 3D gun mode (FMV backgrounds with nicely animated sprites coming directly at the player) SCUD zips back and a crosshair appears. A diverse element, yes, but a fun one... well, perhaps for some. I've never liked gun games and so this is a feature I can live without.

For the most part SCUD is a basic side-scroller laced with rendered characters, digitized explosions, generous parallax, gruesome hits, and a truly likeable hero. Bosses are big but pixelly and, for the most part, very easy to kill when compared to the challenge the levels themselves dish out. The soundtrack is of the dating industrial sort and ranges from good to pass-the-ear-plugs.

It's when you combine the solid 2D, passable 3D, unique 2-player function, and excellent FMV, that SCUD begins to take shape. SegaSoft has a few screws to tighten before SCUD's ready for a review and I wait with angst for the finished product. 2D after all is the SS's strong point so SCUD must begin to fill a gap that you could drive a Humvee through.

ES

ES SATURN

2 previews

CIDERBOTS



Capcom's mech based 2-D fighter is on its way to the Saturn as we speak, and as you can see, Capcom has added some new characters! That Akuma gets around eh. CB has a March release date in Japan, so expect a US version this Summer-3rd Qtr.

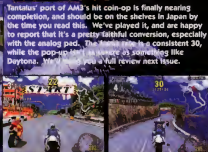
DUKE NUKEM

This is the one I'm waiting for. The Saturn programming gurus at Lobotomy are currently in the process of converting the PC first person shooter Duke Nukem 3D to the Saturn. It's commonly acknowledged as one of the greatest Doom-style games ever made, and in single player mode it's even more enjoyable than the mighty Quake (which Lobotomy is also converting to the Saturn). No word yet on how much of the sex and violence will remain intact.



MANX TT

Super Bike

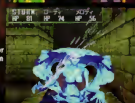
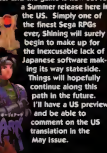
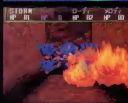
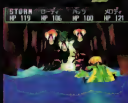


Tantalus' port of AM3's hit coin-op is finally nearing completion, and should be on the shelves in Japan by the time you read this. We've played it, and are happy to report that it's a pretty faithful conversion, especially with the analog pad. The frame rate is a consistent 30, while the pop-up menu is sure of something like Daytona. We'll give you a full review next issue.



GREAT NEWS!!

Those of you who tuned in to my import review of Shining last month may have noticed how liked I was that Sega (at the time) hadn't considered it for US release. Without going too much into detail let me simply proclaim that my rant was not in vain. SOA started localization shortly thereafter and the game is now set for a Summer release here in the US. Simply one of the finest Sega RPGs ever, Shining will surely begin to make up for the inexcusable lack of Japanese software making its way stateside. Things will hopefully continue along this path in the future. I'll have a US preview and be able to comment on the US translation in the May issue.



A w yeah baby, *Mortal Kombat* is back, and this time it's making a leap bigger than any of its predecessors. *MK4* is currently around 30% complete and is scheduled for release in either June or July, although nothing is final. There is no story yet, but when asked if there were any new gameplay features, such as *MK3*'s Resurrection, *MK* programmer and producer Ed Boon replied, "New hah? No! A new mode of gameplay? Yeah!" We know *MK4* is 3D, but as to how much this will effect the way the game plays is unknown at present. What we do know is that *MK*'s trademark finishing moves (Fatalities, Heavens, etc.) are out. As Boon stated, "MK4 will not feature any of *MK*'s trademark cartoon finishing moves because we want the game to be much darker and scarier."

Gameplay changes aside, the other major advancement in *MK4* is the hardware. The game now runs on a 64-bit system entitled "Zeus." The hardware was designed by Williams tech wizard Mark Lofredo, the man behind every piece of Williams hardware since *Nazco*. Zeus draws about

1.2 million polygons a second with all features on; i.e. shading, anti-aliasing, load-management, light emitting, the works! Take a look at the shots on this page... They aren't from any rendered CG. They're real game shots!

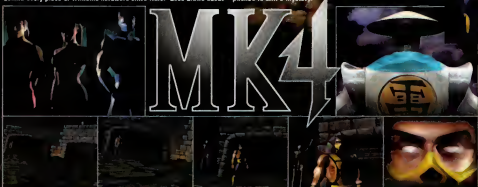
MK4's cast of 12 warriors includes the return of Raiden, Sub-Zero, Liu Kang, Scorpion and possibly Sonya, with the rest composed entirely of new characters. The game uses approximately 2,900 to 3,000 polygons per character at 60 frames per second, with detailed real time 3D backgrounds. You should be able to recognize the background in these shots—it's from Gore's Lair. Does this mean the return of Gore? Only *Jeilias* and Boon know and they're not saying...

Finally, we have some news on the home versions of *MK4*. Both an N64 and PS version are scheduled for a release later this year, though how a conversion of such powerful hardware will be accomplished is still a mystery.



CRUNCHERS

Q: "style" is what?



Here's a last-second update on the AOU show, Japan's premier arcade game exhibition, which was held at Makuhari Messe in Chiba on 2/18 and 2/19. Rest assured, we'll have a full AOU report in the next issue of GameFan.

The '97 AOU was a somewhat subdued one, with few huge announcements other than SNK's Neo-Geo 64. Sega had three games: *House of the Dead*, an impressive Model 3 shooter, *Top Skater*, a skateboarding game, and *Virtual Soccer 2*, a Model 3 soccer game. Namco's booth was semi-disappointing with *Tekken 3* and *Alpine Racer 2*, both of which had already been

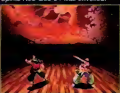
seen, and *Armaddio Racing*, an innovative racing game controlled with a trackball. Konami debuted their new driving game *Jam Racer*, which ran on their 5,000,000-polygon-per-second Cobra hardware. Show floor reports say *Jam Racer* makes *Scud Race* look like a toy, but only time will tell. Konami also had the innovative *Hang Pilot*, a hang-gliding game with two screens—one ahead and one below you—to simulate a full 3D view. Toho was showing a brief demo of *Psychic Force 2* running on their new Taito Wolf 3D hardware, but, unfortunately, no pictures were allowed. Capcom, in my opinion, had the best showing: *Street Fighter III*, *Vampire Savior*, and *Battle Circuit*. VS is the latest game in the ultra-popular (in Japan, at least) *Vampire* series. There's not much room to go into detail about it here, but expect a full preview next issue. *SFIII* needs no introduction, and *Battle Circuit* was a cool, comical side-scrolling beat-'em-up in the *Final Fight* tradition.

Each year, Japanese arcade magazine *Gamest* polls all comers to the show on what their favorite games were. The rankings were as follows: 1.) *Vampire Savior*, 2.) *Tekken 3*, and 3.) *Street Fighter III*. Look for more AOU next month!



SAMURAI SPIRITS
NEO-Geo 64

The most surprising announcement at the AOU came in the form of SNK's new 64-bit hardware, the Neo-Geo 64. A video of *Samurai Spirits Neo-Geo 64* was unveiled.



Details on the game were few and far between, but it appears there are four new characters, one of which looks suspiciously like Rei Ayanami from the popular *Evangelion* series. *Samurai* is at an extremely early level of development, but expect more on *SSNG64* next issue! This is the only game in which you can "embody fierce chambera in parallel 3-D worlds," so be prepared!



SNK's incredibly hardcore Band of Fighters! Yes, they're mannequins

The Samurai Spirits Neo-Geo 64 display

Godlike standups at the Capcom booth. I must own these!

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SPECIAL



CHIEF HAMBLETON TOUR OF DUTY PART 2: ANOTHER AUDIENCE WITH CORE DESIGN!



"Core" Blimey, if it ain't me old muckers from across the pond. Knock me down if this 'ere Europa special don't feature more of them there blokes from Core. Are you gawping?

The town: Derby, England. The weather: Freezing. The Mission: Interrogate the rest of the Core Development staff to find out some of the company's plans for 1997 and beyond. The Game: Judgement Force. The Result: Even more informative shenanigans from the world of Core Design.



The men of Judgement Force, currently beavering away on what could be the best fighting action title since *Streets of Rage*. From left to right: Mac Avory (Programmer), David Long (Programmer) and Roberto Cirillo (Artist).

Core have three more top titles planned for this year; *Swagman* (see elsewhere in this issue), *Ninja* and *Judgement Force*. Being rather partial to a spot of fist/cuff action, I headed down to the catacombs housing the gentlemen responsible for *Judgement Force*. Here's what they had to say about the best-looking polygon punch-up game yet seen...

CH: So this is the fighting game. What is the actual title?
TJF: (Team Judgement Force): *Judgement Force* is the working title.

CH: And you've been working on it for at least ten months?
TJF: Probably a bit less. Obviously, it's because it's the sort of game we haven't done before; we're just trying to work it all out.

CH: It's going to be released on three platforms? PC, Saturn, and PlayStation?

TJF: Yup.

CH: Which is the most complete version?

TJF: The Saturn version.

CH: What sort of inspiration did you take? I mean, did you look at stuff like *Tekken 2* or *Street Fighter*—do you have any influences?

TJF: The old, the good old *Streets of Rage*, and the new fighting games. It's basically taking a game like *Streets of Rage* and combining with all of the 3D games.

CH: Is it more of a walk along, rather than sort of a set fight?
TJF: Yeah. Yea, you progress on to the next situation in an ongoing scenario.

CH: How many fighters are there going to be, do you think?

TJF: We prefer the term "contantsants". Four are available.

CH: So this is more like a sort of *Streets of Rage* in 3D?

TJF: Yup.

CH: At the moment, approximately how many polygons is each character made up of?

TJF: We're trying to keep the characters down to between 150 and 300.

CH: What's the sort of plot behind this... do you have one yet?

TJF: We kind of had one but we couldn't use it. It's definitely the good guys versus the bad guys.

CH: Would you say you took a lot of influence for this from *Final Fight* and *Die Hard Arcade*?

TJF: Yeah, you really have to go back and look at the older games and see what made them work. Then add dramatically to it. It's a completely different game than *Die Hard*—you can't really compare them. You can't say they are both directional 3D games, because *Die Hard* really isn't a 3D game.

CH: How many of you are involved in the game's creation, how big is the team?

TJF: Round about four at the moment.

CH: The backgrounds are 2D sort of scrolling, would you say?

TJF: Well yeah, the really far away backgrounds are 2D.

CH: How many moves per character do you think there will be?

TJF: About 35, so far.

CH: How many levels are there going to be?

TJF: Maybe a dozen, without loads of power ups and huge zones to explore.

CH: When do you think we'll see a version in the States? Probably April or May?

TJF: Maybe later. We're planning a Summer release.

The time had come for me to leave. I thanked my gracious hosts, and waited anxiously for the games to be finished. *Judgement Force*, and another game called *Ninja* (both of which were in very early stages of development) looked to be very exciting games indeed. The next year should see Core propelled to the forefront of video games development, and rightly so. Not only does Core have some of the best programmers and artists in the business, but the nicest bunch of people you're ever likely to meet. GameFan waits for the final products with giddy anticipation.

Full Contact Contest

WIN A COMPLETE MARTIAL ARTS GYM SET COMPLIMENTS OF
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One complete set with 60-lb. heavy bag, leather speed bag, leather bag gloves, Everlast robe and boxing trunks. (1 winner)

FIRST PRIZE (5)

A copy of K-1 The Arena Fighters for the Sony PlayStation. (5 winners)

SECOND PRIZE (10)

1 year subscription to Black Belt magazine and an Everlast Gym Bag. (10 winners)

CONTEST RULES

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter mail a standard postcard containing your name, address, phone number and age to "K-1 The Arena Fighters Contest" c/o T+HQ, 5816 North Parkway Calabasas, Suite 100, Calabasas, California 91302. Limit one entry per Participant. Entries must be received by May 15th, 1997. All entries become the exclusive property of T+HQ/GAMEFAN magazine (sponsors) and will not be acknowledged or returned. Sponsors assume no responsibility for lost, mutilated, late, illegible, incomplete, postage due or misdirected entries. Drawing will be held on or about May 20th, 1997.



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SPORTS



JACQUES STIEN



HOCKEY

EA's Mask-grade Celebration

Once again, EA shows the sports game industry why their motto is, "It's in the Game." It's not enough to just make a fun game anymore, but rather an all-encompassing experience. In their cover-story search for individualism and the cutting edge, EA may have opened yet another path to the sports game world beyond.

Chip Lange, Director of Sports Marketing says quite simply, "EA's goal is to find ways to differentiate us from the rest." About 3 years ago, the competition started to catch on to all of the NHL/NHLPA licensing, an aspect of sports games that was used exclusively by EA before then. EA found themselves forced to brainstorm for new and innovative ideas. Back then, the helmets to EA's NHL series were plain white. "How cool would it be to have the actual helmet designs of each goalie?" they pondered. After researching the matter, they found that the masks weren't even licensed by the NHL, but rather by a group based out of Santa Monica, called Five Hole. The two companies put a deal together, and came to an agreement that allowed EA to have the helmet designs to their game.

What transpired from there may be termed "a stroke of luck." The game developers discovered they needed actual, physical renditions of each helmet in order to accurately, compare 3-D, rendered helmets to the game. Five Hole got busy the following 6 months, producing 50 full-sized helmets for EA, thus making EA the proud owner of the largest collection of goalie masks in the world. EA proceeded to show this collection of trade shows around the country, including the infamous E3. What they discovered was a wildly popular reaction to the collection, and a huge parade of requests.

Hindsight is 20/20, EA was thrilled at the response and subsequently introduced their "Stanley Cup Collection"—a collection of minoritized masks of the last 5 Stanley Cup winning teams (New Jersey Devils, Colorado Avalanche, New York Rangers, Florida Panthers, and Montreal Canadiens). Why the hype over a hockey mask? Unlike football helmets or baseball caps, the hockey masks are highly individualized, often reflecting not only the team's city or mascot, but sometimes even the goalie's very own personality. The reason for this lies in the fact that each goalie contracted out and worked with their very own artist, and worked together to cultivate those visions onto the helmet. Victor of individualism can be seen on helmets like Florida's "Beast," who sports a large, yellow "B" on his helmet or Ilya Kovalchuk of the New York Rangers, who created a new look, Jersey that is based on goalie Mike Richter's Statue of Liberty-based, mask design.

All 5 of these miniature masks are available through EA now, and color photos of each one are enclosed with each copy of NHL '97. 76 more masks will be available by September, just in time for the NHL playoffs. Included: Hackett of Chicago, Latime of Pittsburgh, Hecstak of Vancouver and 13 others.

To order, call EA's Hockey Mask Hotline at: 1-800-245-4525.



KIDD'S CORNER



ACCLAIM "Shines on All-Star Weekend"

Now, if you've ever seen the movie, "Midnight Express" you would have frightening and ghastly misconceptions of the country called Turkey. Because upon visiting the land, you would find that it is as beautiful and vastly enjoyable as a Thanksgiving Dinner! Well, quite sometime ago, Howard Casell enjoyed the endearing term "Malake by the Lake" in reference to Cleveland, Ohio. As I boarded the plane en route to Cleveland, all the dreary images of the snow-covered Dawg Pound, and smokestacks shooting into the grey, tumultuous sky killed my mind. If I weren't such a massive hoops fan, I may not have found the courage to make the journey that Acclaim had so generously provided for me.

Well to my surprise, I fell into a city bustling with life, from the dramatic architectural structures and art pieces downtown, to the wildly popular restaurants and nightclubs over in the Flats. They should have called the city the Bars full of Stars—well, on this weekend, at least. Two feet to the right of me was Kevin McHale... Whoa! Swing around, there goes Dr. J... Is that really Bill Russell over there? Excuse me, Mr. Chamberlain, may I have your autograph?... I just want to get one more photo with Rick Barry... So, Larry, who's really the greatest?

Everywhere we went, we were bumping into Grant Hill, sitting across from ESPN's Mike Tirice or chatting with Leslie Visser. NBA Jam Session was hopping with 3-on-3 tournaments, 7, 8 and 9 foot mini sports card vending games, various games and collectibles for prizes, and Acclaim's very own 500 square foot NBA Jam Booth—what a sight to behold! Acclaim packed it in with a multitude of PlayStations and television monitors, on head-to-head competition took place everywhere you turned. Kids and grown-ups alike tested their skills and admired the NBA Jam tournament that started with hundreds, and ended with one. Acclaim boasted visits by Desmond Howard, Antonio Freeman, Marion Williams, Kaden Henshaw and more... All participated in the fun and games, but the contestants in the tournament took their Jam seriously, because the winner would walk away with the grand prize—a \$5000 NBA Jam cap of their own. When it was all said and done, the semi-finalists received prize packages of games, tickets and apparel, totalling over an estimated \$500 apiece. The runner-up to the grand prize received a package even more loaded, estimated around \$1000!

One of the ensuing highlights of the weekend for me however, was meeting with the Acclaim crew on all of several of the sports editors from other magazines. The reason it proved to make such an impact on me, is that just like my misconceptions of Cleveland, Acclaim proved me wrong on many of my Big Game stereotypes. Mike Jerchow, Assistant Product Manager, explained, "I'm not gonna lie to you, we've had a rough year..." What Mike was referring to, was the reputation of mediocrity that Acclaim's sports label had earned over the years. He went on to explain how sports games had always taken a backseat before, and how Jam was treated like King, while all the others were somewhat orphaned. But he then went on to demonstrate how a new emphasis and priority was being placed on sports, in terms of concentrating on licensing, getting top-rated sports figures like Brett Favre and Shawn Kemp to endorse their products, building a \$100 million multiplatform studio of their own... so advanced that even WB used it to film parts of Space Jam, and even increasing their budget for sports product to an enormous \$20 million!

But aside from these revolutionary and cutting edge changes, the thing that struck me was the sincerity of this Acclaim crew. Here is a heavy-hitting, big-time, interactive entertainment company basically saying, "We've screwed up, and we want your help to improve," and who better to ask, but the guys who make reviewing sports games a career? What they got was a downpour of sports game input, from years and years of gaming experience, dating back to the days of Intellivision and Atari to the unveiling of N64, from collectors of baseball cards to the most die-hard of Warriors fans. The results were extraordinary, not only in feedback, but the relationships that were built, because of one simple fact—game editors WANT good games to review, and would love nothing more than an opportunity to help make that happen. They're the first company I've been in contact with that has actually been gracious enough to ask for help—not a guise pretending to ask what I liked about certain games, but simply a humble, yet wise request.

On more than one occasion, wireless game developers approached me to discuss new ideas, and my thoughts on how to execute them. Acclaim took the time, amidst one of the busiest events of the year, to discuss improving their product. They educated me on the finer points of obtaining licensing, the obscurities of the motion capture process as well as the industry on a whole—a no condescension, not once. You may wonder why I share this side of the business with you, and my reason is to show you that sometimes there are faces and names within those big, nameless corporations. JK

Joe Kidd can be e-mailed at: rlee@metropolismedia.com

COMING THIS YEAR BY ACCLAIM!



Well hockey fans, I've seen the future in hockey games. *NHL Breakaway '98* should get a standing ovation from all of you. You will experience the most features of any hockey game available, including: Hi-Res 3-D, polygonal, motion-captured graphics that don't taknaway from the tempo of the action, a Momentum-Based Checking System that is determined by players' weights and speed, Playbook-Based AI that sets up actual plays from the designated teams, Variable Player Sizes based on real physical attributes, Non-Stick Handler Control, a Total Team Management System in which you receive points which are applied toward improving your coaching, player development, and injury therapy, Icoo Passing, Create Players that sport their new name on their jersey, World Teammament Teams, including USA, Canada and Russia, Full Season Stat-Tracking, Multiple Season Play, AI-based trades, and advanced coaching strategies as well... You better believe this hockey game means business. It's licensed by the NHL, NHLPA and STATS, Inc.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and Windows '95 **Players:** 1-8 **Available:** August 1997



On January 22, 1997 Acclaim made another advancement toward the top, when they announced the signing of Super Bowl MVP Brett Favre to endorse their *NFL Quarterback Club '98*. Upon the announcement, Favre proclaimed, "It's an honor to be selected as Acclaim's featured quarterback... and I look forward to working with the Acclaim sports team to create the best football game ever." Needless to say, Acclaim was ecstatic over the signing, but know it takes a lot more than a big name to make the game. *QB Club '98* will have all 30 NFL teams, with corresponding 3D rendered stadiums and over 1500 players! You will have exclusive in-game profiles and game tips from the quarterbacks themselves. You like the 'Ninners? Well now you can pre-program your entire sequence of opening offensive plays, just like they do. Players' injuries will affect game and season performance as well. Stat tracking over the entire season will include league leaders in 9 different categories. And all this complete with Marv Albert calling the play by play.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn, DOS CD-ROM **Players:** 1-8 **Available:** August 1997



Spring training is upon us and not a moment too soon, as Acclaim's *All-Star Baseball '97* (featuring MVP Frank Thomas) is about to hit the shelves. This '98 title will feature all 28 teams, logos and 3D rendered stadiums—even the new 1998 expansion teams; the Arizona Diamondbacks and Tampa Bay Devil Rays. Frank Thomas got personal, by involving himself in the Motion Capture Animations. He is not alone in this game, as you will have over 700 MLB players to pick up or trade for. *All-Star* features the complete 1997 MLB schedule, and offers full season stat-tracking as well. 6 gameplay modes are offered: Exhibition, Season, Playoffs, All-Star, Batting Practice and Home Run Derby. If you're familiar with ESPN's award winning baseball voice, Jon Miller, also of the San Francisco Giants... or should I say, if you're familiar with the game of baseball... Well, Acclaim has brought Miller aboard for the true-to-life MLB experience, with Miller's style and humorous anecdotes that have made him the voice of baseball over the last 20 years.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn **Players:** 1-2 **Available:** April 15, 1997



VR Baseball looks to have all the makings of a great baseball game. I mean, you read about all of the exciting features that are offered, like updated 1997 rosters with 1996 statistics, a real time scoreboard that keeps track of scores around the league as well as current statistics, real 3D stadiums with all 28 Major League Stadiums, and more. But the preview version that I played, although very early, has a long way to go.

You will swear by the sounds that you are actually in the ballpark; intermittent screams from the crowd, a faint murmur surrounding the yard, the announcer's voice resonating off the walls throughout, and the hollow crack of

GAMEFAR
SPORTS



PREVIEW



PlayStation

EXCLUSIVE VR SPORTS

FINAL COPY VR SPORTS

TODAY! CD

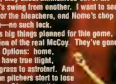
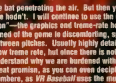
1-ON PLAYERS 1-2

DIFFICULTY INTERMEDIATE

MINI-BATT - BATTING 5.7



JOE KIDD
SUH-WING,
BATTAH...



the bat penetrating the air. But then you open your eyes, and almost wish you hadn't. I will continue to use the disclaimer that it is a "very early version"—the graphics and frame-rate have a long way to go. The sluggish speed of the game is disconcerting, springing anxiety upon you even between pitches. Usually highly detailed graphics can be blamed for such slow frame rate, but since there is not much precision to talk about, I can't understand why we are burdened with both situations. The animation has great promise, as you can even decipher clearly the players' names and numbers, as VR Baseball uses the much-acclaimed Motion Capture process and polygon players. However, they cheat themselves out of the full effect as you cannot tell one player's swing from another. I want to see a difference between Big Hurt's swing for the bleachers, and Nomo's chop to the infield. But to my dissatisfaction—no such luck.

The good news is, I know that VR has big things planned for this game, and what I've seen is a very raw rendition of the real McCoy. They've gone to such lengths as to include 4 Uniform Options: home, away, alternate and practice. VRB will have true light, bounce and roll for every surface from grass to astroturf. And one of the features I like most is that the pitchers start to lose their edge as innings wear on. Of course, this game would not be complete without VR's signature 360-degree camera rotation, which is the most dramatic effect that astonishes everyone. JK

MINNESOTA

OAKLAND



"The most realistic fighting simulation on any platform!"

— GAMEFAN Magazine

- Eight real athletes, each with their own fighting style
- Stunning 3-D and 2-D arenas
- Four fighting modes: One Player, VS. Tournament, and Team Battle
- Sanctioned by K-1, the official international tournament fighting organization

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BLACK BELT



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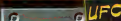
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R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - HUMAN
PUBLISHER - HUMAN
FORMAT - CD
NO. OF PLAYERS - 1-6
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



JACQUES STRAP
Mindless multi-
player 2D wrestling
extravaganza

UFC STYLE

Strap's one happy punk. They keep throwing these wrestling games my way and I keep liking them! This month's wrestling review spotlights Human's *Fire Pro Wrestling: Six Men Scramble*. I've been swamped by beautiful, polygonal beasts for the last few months, so playing *Six Men Scramble* in all of hand drawn, 2D joy is a breath of fresh air.



STEEL CAGE MODE

Let's clear something up, straight off: *Six Men Scramble* is pure arcade action. It's not a simulation, and you won't need a strategy guide to play. Nothing but a ton of cool moves, easy controls, and constant mayhem. The wrestlers are takes, but I found exact duplicates of practically every big name: Macho Man, Vader, The Giant, The Road Warriors, Sting, The Steiner Bros., and specialists like Maurice Smith, Peter Albin, and a ton of others. You might have noticed these last two aren't wrestlers, and that's exactly what this game offers: Athletes from wrestling, kickboxing,

shoot-fighting, even UFC, and they all use their custom styles and moves against each other. Ever wonder how the polished mat-fighting of Shamrock would hold up against the crushing claims and holds of the dog-faced premin? In *Six Men Scramble*, anything goes.

So you're still not interested? Try this one: Multi-tapped, 6 player, simultaneous wrestling. Steel cage, electric fence, octagon, and dome rings. Over 35 fighters, each with 5 different uniforms. Battle Royale, Death Match, Elimination, Tournament, and Wrestler Creation modes. There's even 4 different refs, and, you guessed it, some are blind, some are tough.



More? How about silky-smooth scaling, to keep track of the action. Or zero slow-down, even when six mad sprites are pounding the ropes. Throw in

devastating tag-team moves, power counters, even last-second reversals, and, well, I'm out of breath.

I'm going to cap this one off with an essential point: *Fire Pro Wrestling* is a must-have multi-player game, guaranteed to please. The moves are ultra-basic, there's an insane amount of characters and options, and...and it's 2D, imagine that? JS

BATTLE ROYALE!



Fire Pro Wrestling

SIX MEN SCRAMBLE





Sony's *NBA Shoot Out '97* has me intrigued. When all the white I thought in the Zone 2 had great graphics and gameplay but not enough realism, I conversely felt that *NBA Live '97* was extremely realistic, but gameplay was a little too slow. *Shoot Out*, on the other hand, seems to have a combination of realism as well as tempo, and smooth gameplay that makes this hoops game as appealing. I do, however, consider this game to be more Zone-ish than *Live*-ish. Steals are still very easy to get like Zone, but *Shoot Out* offers more in the way of one-on-one play, better timed rebounds, and the ability to take a charge.

The court graphics are great, but I would prefer more detail applied to the individual players. It's difficult to distinguish specific players, other than their skin tone and their speed... I mean, you can't accurately say, "Now that's Scottie Pippen." The only other hang-up I had, was that you cannot shoot a shot from the baseline, without the ball hitting the back end of the backboard, even though you are clearly in bounds... However, the fancy dribbling is the best I've seen—behind the backs, crossovers, and between the legs. I would, however, like to see the moves have more of an impact in terms of faking out the opponent. I found it difficult, but possible, to shake defenders one on one, and the interior game is equally difficult, as computer defenders do not go for the pump fake and they block shots with the greatest of ease—no any layups here! It is really refreshing to see guys taking charges and being sent sprawling on their backs, or big men in the paint being stripped as they bring the ball down—these are frequent occurrences in the actual game of basketball that are seldom or never seen in any of the other basketball sims.

You do have Create Player Mode which is always fun, and in Sony's version, they have allotted only a specific amount of skills to be distributed where you desire. One of the more attractive features are the statistics that are shown by the players' head shots as they apply, like Jason Kidd with 25 assists. There are 6 different camera angles in the camera menu, which comes complete with a preview window. For all you rookie bonnie, *Shoot Out '97* has the complete class of this year's talented rookies; high-school phenoms and senior standouts. You can play exhibition, a season w/ stat-tracking, or else shoot straight to the playoffs. This game does some real nice things, and is worth the investment. **JAX**

 	 PlayStation	DEVELOPER - SONY	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2	 JOE KIDD BEST YET?
		PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE	
		FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW	

FIFA 97

GAMEFAN
SPORTS



PREVIEW



WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

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WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP

WORLD CUP



The Saturn *FIFA '97* was previewed last issue, if you remember, based on an early beta version. Our latest rev has reached its final beta stages, so this might be your last chance to check it out before it joins the PS version on the shelves.

The *FIFA* series has always benefited from the license. To most of us, this is cool (world teams, many leagues, etc.), but it's not going to determine if it's worth buying. We're just looking for the best playing/best looking soccer game, something like Sega's *WWS '97* or Konami's *Perfect Striker*. Anybody can see the power in these titles. *FIFA*'s been the best for years, but never since it hit the PS and Saturn it's been illlind with problems.

For starters, the Saturn version has a horrible frame rate. 20 fps, tops, and it shows. The indoor and outdoor stadiums are well-designed, I'll give them that, but the poor frame rate screws up everything. I guess the polygonal players really tax the Saturn hardware—no, wait! *VR Soccer* did it, *WWS '97* did it, and the frame rate was excellent in both games. No excuses; *FIFA '97* looks bad...

Why does it have to play as bad as it looks?! Really, it seems as though every movement you attempt to execute is accompanied by a severe lag time. You'll be chugging up the field, coasting the frames per second on both hands, and the game just refuses to respond on time! Frustration, you! It's like the whole game, and I mean everything, from bed control to chunky graphics, isn't moving as fast as it should (or could) be. If it means anything, the hot tricks and lobbs offer delicious set up opportunities, just give yourself LOTS of time to pull off.

J.S. personal note: Hey, I wasn't looking to bag on *FIFA '97*—it's just not too good. The final twentys include new sky backgrounds, menu screen changes, little stuff like that. If the frame rate goes through any improvements, I'll gladly eat my words, but the graphics are apparently done. Hopefully I'll be back with good news—if not, stay away from the Saturn version of *FIFA '97*. JS



JACQUES STRAP

This man needs help, serious help!



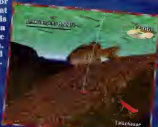
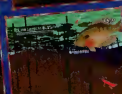
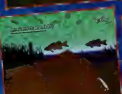
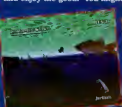
BIG BASS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Forget about *FFVII*, PlayStation fishing is finally here! Oh please, people are too hard on fishing games. These games can only ever do one thing well: offer a realistic fishing experience. If that's missing, it's over. With *Big Bass World Championship*, Hot-B once again proves where their experience lies. This game will leave a bad taste in your mouth the first time you see it in motion, but give it a try, like I did, and you'll be pleasantly surprised by the solid gameplay.

The first time I played *BBWC*, I thought to myself, "There's no way this is going to make it." The 3D engine is on par, or sub-par, with first generation PS 3D standards: clipping problems, polygonal break-up, and a poor frame rate. The fishermen are rendered, but for some strange reason there's glitchy spots floating all around them (I keep telling people it's them darn mosquitoes!). Even the CG, in the intro and intermissions, is basic, boring stuff. There you have it, the graphics aren't even a factor.

But I looked beyond all that, entered a tournament, and started fishing. I liked the control on the boat, and the casting system is accurate and well-implemented (as in: it takes skills). Reeling in fish is a special treat: For every pull on the line, you must counter in that same direction with a tug of your own. All of this goes down **FAST**, and you've got to keep an eye on the power meter of the fish in order to judge the reel-in (certain counter-tugs take off more energy). Very cool. You can also swap between over and underwater views, just in case you're using bobbing lures to entice the fishies.

Big Bass is very relaxing: ambient sound effects, rain, thunder, the works. There's plenty of tournaments, a free practice lake, and a perfect menu system (marred only by excessive loading). I'm glad I played this one enough to filter through the bad, and enjoy the good. You might do the same. **JS**



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GOOD JOB
HAVE GAIN KNOWLEDGE STAGE 1 & 2
(Catalan Version) (1 & 2)

R
REVIEW

P
PlayStation

DEVELOPER - HOT-B

PUBLISHER - HOT-B

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW



JACQUES TRAP
FFVII WHO CARES?
I'M GOIN' FISHIN'

CHOOSE FROM EIGHT
WORLD-CLASS FIGHTERS!!!



THE ARENA FIGHTERS

In a world where wrestling, martial arts and so-called street fighting games comprise a major slice of the video game pie, it's amazing how few realistic simulations of legitimate hand-to-hand combat are actually available to gamers. The wrestling games—as well as the 3D arcade fighting games such as *Virtua Fighter* and *Tobal No. 1*—have a serious problem for the purist. For one thing, they're based on an ersatz sport. Pro wrestling has been "worked" (i.e. choreographed) for

a vast majority of this century, evolving into a highly ritualized and undeniably athletic combination of stuntwork and soap opera.

The martial arts or street fighting contests rarely even attempt to imitate reality. In most cases, the *karate* and *kung fu* seen in video games are once-removed replications of the kind of *mano a mano* (i.e. hand-to-hand) combat seen in chop-socky films. The punches are accompanied by cannon-like explosions, while the fighters can leap vast heights and distances and even hurl bolts of fire or other forces through the psychokinetic evocation of *chi*, energy which is said to be generated within the human body.

All of which is a pretty good distance from a sumo match or a kempo competition.

K-1: The *Arena Fighters*, on the other hand, is dripping with realism. Based on a first-rate Japanese game which was sold under the title *Fighting Illusion*, T+HQ picked up the license, then signed a deal with the prestigious K-1 kickboxing organization to use the K-1 tournament name and format. Then the publisher actually signed eight K-1 competitors, allowing gamers to use simulacra possessing the skill, style, strength and stamina of legit kickboxing stars Andy Hug, Ernesto Hoost, Mike Bernardo, Sam Greco, Musashi, Jerome Le Banner, Peter Aerts and Changpuek Kiatsongrit.

You want realism? Each of the fighters is outfitted with an on-screen fact sheet as well as a rotating, ray-traced three-dimensional body model and supplementary facial portrait. It can be played in one-player, two-player or tournament mode (with tournaments permitting human players to control up to all eight fighters). Other neat features include an auto-cam point of view which automatically adjusts to provide the optimal visual display; power meters which indicate the flow of momentum and the combatants' stamina; and a digital clock to track the three-minute rounds.

The play action is pretty smooth, though fighters tend to slide around the ring more than step and the graphics, while not loaded up with spectacular eye candy, are absolute meat-and-potatoes stuff. And don't try to turn this into a boxing match, at least not against a computer-controlled foe; punchers who can't do damage with their feet rarely make it past the first round (remember, in actual tournaments there is a mandatory minimum number of kicks which must be thrown in every round or the fighter forfeits points).

Are you r-r-r-ready to rumble? If so, *K-1: The Arena Fighters* will give you all you can handle. **BK**

R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - KING

PUBLISHED - T+HQ

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW



BILL KUNKEL
K1 is dripping with realism!



When Fighters Coming to the PlayStation?

In a startling turn of events, the current president of Bandai and soon-to-be president of Sega-Bandai commented in the February 6 issue of the Mainichi Shimbun, a well-respected Japanese newspaper, that Sega had obtained a license to develop a Virtua Fighter game for the PlayStation. "The new company's [Sega-Bandai's] policies," stated the president, "will completely change." For example, we have obtained a license to produce a Virtua Fighter on SCE's PlayStation. If Nintendo gives the OK, we'll produce one on the Nintendo 64 as well."

This is huge news if it proves true. Unfortunately, when Sega and Bandai were contacted directly about this matter, they staunchly denied it. They did, however, hint at the possibility of Sega making other PlayStation games: "Bandai is not going to release software exclusively for the Saturn. It's possible that Sega's titles may appear on PlayStation [from Bandai] and Bandai's PlayStation games may appear on Saturn."

Only time will tell. The Sega/Bandai merger is due for October, so don't expect any official announcements until then.

BioHazard 2 Delayed: Game To Be Released On 2 CDs

In a surprise announcement, Capcom of Japan has revealed that BioHazard 2 is currently facing an almost total re-design, and will now arrive in late 1997 on 2 CDs! Why the changes? Apparently Capcom felt BioHazard 2 was too similar to the original, and wanted to give players a more unique experience. They also mentioned a new aspect of this game called "Zapping", rumored to utilize the memory cards in some fashion.

Final Fantasy VII Breaks All Sales Records

Square's Final Fantasy VII sold through almost 2.4 million units in its first weekend on sale, effectively making it the fastest-selling game of all time. The vast majority of these sales were not through game shops, but rather convenience stores equipped with SquareDigiCube's kiosks. This will come as quite a surprise to naysayers who claimed the convenience store plan just wouldn't work.

Capcom Prepares CyberBots Special Edition

Capcom of Japan is preparing a ¥7,800 special edition CyberBots package for Japanese release, of which there will be only 55,555 copies ever made. The special edition comes with the CyberBots Secret File DX, a 50-page hardcover art, CG, and comic book based on Capcom's popular freebie "Secret Files," the CyberBots Panorama illustration, a folding pop-up-book, and a specially packaged game case, CD and manual. The home version of CyberBots (as well as allowing you to use the arcade version's boss robots and characters) features an all-new, CG rendered character... Zero Gouki. Zero Gouki is, obviously, a giant robot version of everyone's favorite Shokolan master. 2G comes with all his human counterpart's moves, including the Go Hadoken, Go Shoryuken, and Tatsumaki Zanikukyaku.

CyberBots is compatible with SNK's 8-Meg RAM cartridge (although not necessary to play the game, it adds more frames of animation) and will be released in Japan in March.

Ys Returns

Yes, it's true: Falcom has announced a new game in the critically acclaimed Ys series, Ys Eternal. There's just one catch: Falcom is going back to its roots, and Eternal will only be available for Japanese NEC PC-98X1 personal computers. Ys Eternal has no release date as of yet, and we can only hope and dream that Falcom announces it for a home console.

New Prices Drop In Japan

Nintendo of Japan reported that their Nintendo 64 system will receive a price drop of 33% on March 14, lowering the machine's cost from ¥25,000 to ¥16,800 (approximately \$204 to \$137). Why the sudden reduction in price? According to Nintendo, high manufacturing volumes have resulted in a new lower price for semiconductors, but experts tell a very different story. Apparently Nintendo, with their lack of new games, is feeling the heat from Sega and Sony. N64's software sales currently comprise only 1-3% of the game weekly sales totals in Japan (with PlayStation game sales hovering around 45-60%), and the hardware's not doing much better. And while this new lower price might temporarily alleviate the slow system sales, it's safe to say that nothing will permanently change until more games are released.

Namco Is Creating Live Action Movies

While news of Namco working on CG films is nothing new, their latest movie project is something of a surprise. Simply labeled "Ai Suru" (To Love), Namco's new film announcement is not only based on a famous Japanese love story, it features live actors! That's right, Namco's making live action movies! Strange but true... More information as we get it!

Excitingly Featuring Mucky Portable Simulation Game

Bandai's new portable game is selling like hotcakes among female consumers. The game is called Tamagotchi, and its name comes from "tamago" (which means "egg") and "watch." The interesting point of this game is that it is a portable simulation game for raising a chick-like creature. The manufacturer claims that it is a digital pet that came from outer space, and is not a chick. The little screen shows the process of its growth—an egg hatches, a chick comes out, grows, and lays eggs. The funny thing is that you have to take care of the chicks as if you were actually raising them. Otherwise, they die! The game is egg shaped and is about 4 cm x 3 cm; you can easily hold it in your hand. It sells for about 18 dollars in Japan.



Digital Dance Becomes Reality and Ys Returns

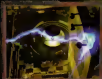
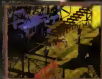
Console game machines appear to be becoming the stage for singers. Digital Dance Mix Vol. 1, from Sega Enterprises, is a CD-ROM that features Namie Amuro's dancing and singing. Namie is currently one of the most popular female singers who can dance well while singing. You're probably picturing something like MTV-style video footage on CD-ROM, but your expectations are wrong: This CD-ROM contains 3-D graphics of her—a virtual Namie Amuro. You'll soon forget that this is a virtual idol once you take a look at it, since her movement is so realistic. This is because Namie's moves were motion-captured and processed by Sega's AM2. Now, if you just wanted to watch Namie's dancing, you could just buy a video tape, but there is a function that you can never use on a VCR or LD player. You have 360° camera control, zoom-in and out, and bottom-up angles. The CD-ROM is distributed only in convenience stores, is priced at ¥2,800 and contains two songs plus four different mini-games.

On the contrary, a digital idol has found her way into reality. Shiori Fujisaki, who is a character in the Konami game called Tokimeki Memorial, recently released her debut album, My Sweet Valentine. "When the person in charge of production asked me to compose songs for an idol, Shiori Fujisaki, I didn't know either Shiori or Tokimeki Memorial. When I found out that Shiori is not human but a virtual idol, I was surprised," says well-known song writer, Kazuo Zaitusu.

is FINAL FANTASY VII THE MOST INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE THE WORLD OF VIDEO GAMES HAS EVER OFFERED?



Long lines at convenience stores on a weekend. No, none of these items came close to matching the success of *Final Fantasy VII*, a game that just happens to be the best-selling item in history. Okay, sure, I just made that up. But the real thing is that it might actually be true. Can you think of any other product that's sold that well in a weekend?



Now, I'm not saying that the release of *Final Fantasy VII* is the most important event in human history. There are some very nice things about penicillin, for example. I just want you to know what we're dealing with here. This review isn't a matter of "should you buy *Final Fantasy*," because you should (and you will). And if this review dwells a bit much on the game's negatives, you mustn't think that these problems, although major, can come anywhere close to overbalancing the game's stunning positives—*FFVII* is quite possibly the finest video game ever made. So the topic of this review, in light of the year of anticipation, the broken sales records, and all the media hype, is: "Is any game worth all of that?" And that's a trickier question to answer.

One simply can't exaggerate when discussing the scope of *Final Fantasy VII*. You don't have to see the list of 300+ names in the credits to realize that the budget of this game probably exceeds the budget of the 2nd most expensive game ever by a factor of ten. Outside of the battles, overhead map and mini games, every screen of the game was pre-rendered to a degree of visual quality that's never come close to



FINAL FANTASY VII



being achieved before in the video game industry. And believe it or not, there's nearly fifty hours of this beauty, with no two locations looking even similar, and few occasions in which you have to backtrack. When you toss in the real time battles with their stunning backgrounds, dazzling spell effects, ultra-realistic character motion, and unprecedented enemy variety and design, there's no denying that this is the most beautiful game ever made. By far.

Of course, it's the storyline that makes an RPG (or so conventional wisdom goes), and *FFVII*'s plot is almost as revolutionary as its graphics.

"...stunning backgrounds, dazzling spell effects, ultra-realistic character motion, and unprecedented enemy variety and design!"





No one loves *FF I-6* more than I, but it's no secret that their storylines were written with the pre-teen audience in mind. The influence of Director Yoshinori Kitase made *FFVI*'s storyline far more memorable than previous games, but it has nothing on *FFVII*. Square has clearly turned their sights towards older gamers, and the result is a storyline so complex, powerful, and unexpected that even the briefest of plot summaries would ruin dozens of stunning plot

twists. It's true that the writers completely drop the ball near the end of the game, but even at its worst, *FFVII*'s story is a world apart from the cliché'd delver we've come to expect from video game storylines.

The beautiful graphics and brilliant storyline come together in a way you have to experience to understand... Remember the Opera House from *FFVE*? Of course you do. Now imagine a game in which every single scene is the Opera House. And that right there is reason enough to make *FFVII* the crowning exhibit in the video game hall of fame (viewable in my house by appointment only; \$6.00 for adults, half price for seniors and children under 12). Everything else—the cool battles, the amazing FMV, the dozens of cool mini games, the hours of optional quests, Nobuo Uematsu's characteristically excellent soundtrack—that's all just a nice bonus.

Continued on the next page.

FANTASY FACTS • WHEN YOU KNOW... WHEN

As intrepid *FF*ers know, every Final Fantasy has a new "system" in the battles. *IV* saw the birth of the "Active Time Battles," *V* had the brilliant "Job System," *VI* had the ho-hum "Accessory System," and *VII* has... (dramatic pause) the "Materia System."

Barret Wallace



CLOUD	HP: 1465	MP: 100
BARRET	HP: 1532	MP: 200
ADAM	HP: 1208	MP: 200



For the first time in an *FF* game, no characters have any special abilities or magics, except for their own limit breaks. Instead, the magics, abilities, call spells and special attributes are all sealed inside little Mako-produced crystals called "Materia." These fit into slots on your weapons, and give you all sorts of things... a call spell, the ability to steal, an entire family of magical spells (like all those thunder spells, or cure spells, or whatever), the ability to learn spells from enemies, HP bonuses, increased luck, all sorts of things. Other Materia, when placed in adjoining slots with certain other materia, change that materia's attributes. For example, a spell that once targeted only one ally or enemy can be made to target all your enemies.

The Materia go up levels as you gain Ability Points, which come along with XP at the end of battles. Certain armors and weapons double, or even triple the rate at which your Materia grow, and some weapons and armors don't let them grow at all. Which is a shame, because if you use that equipment, you'll never get to "Master" your materia, which causes the little guys to reproduce themselves in a sudden fit of sexual passion.





Unfortunately, *Final Fantasy VII* is not without its flaws. There are a few small ones: The way your character gets lost in the sometimes confusing backdrops, and the way you have to be constantly re-equipping your Materia when you change characters, for example. And there are a few big ones.

The first big one is the difficulty. In their quest to reach out for a new, older fan base, Square abandoned the challenging nature of previous *Final Fantasy* titles, creating the first FF that could conceivably be beaten without ever dying. I never once pained to slaughter for experience, and after dying only once (in a completely optional subquest), got



through the entire rest of the game with little difficulty. The many optional subquests that I didn't even take the first time through could only have made me stronger, and anyone who completes all of them would have the resources necessary (in the form of a very nasty call spell) to kill the last boss in a single shot. In

Final Fantasy game, this is nearly inescapable. I sincerely hope the difficulty will be raised in the American version (Then they even could sell that version in Japan as *Final Fantasy VII - Hard Type*!).

The other problem is that even with the game's two month delay, the low five-to-ten hours seem horribly rushed. The storyline



Aerith Gainsborough

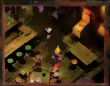
Stunning battle sequences feature a whole array of superbly designed and expertly animated creatures. Prepare for a visual masterpiece!





falls apart near the end, the last dungeon completely sucks, and the game's many subplots and supporting characters have either disappointing resolutions or no resolutions at all. While the last boss, last boss music and ending are all very impressive, the last five or ten hours can't come close to capturing the genius of the first forty. It makes you wonder if there were some really cool parts that were cut from the original plans when Square ran out of time. Square's obvious haste in completing the game could also have been one of the reasons for its unfortunate lack of difficulty.

Although flawed, the worst thing I can say about *Final Fantasy VII* is that it's twenty out of ten that could have been a thirty out of ten. This is still the most incredible experience the world of video gaming has to offer. So in the final analysis, yeah, it is worth all of that. *Takubi*



FANTASY FACTS - THE CALL SPELLS

Without a doubt, the greatest graphical extravagance to behold are the Call Spells. Square's imagination and research into mythology have combined to produce some of the most spectacular incantations ever seen! Amazing PlayStation visuals are called forth!

Call Spells are now only available through Materia, and each of the Call Spell Materia that you equip takes away a hefty chunk of your HP. Still worth it? You better believe it, honey! The call spells are more powerful than ever before, and more importantly, they're possibly the most beautiful things in the game. Anyone who was blown away by the Leviathan call spell in the Tidal No. 1 demo



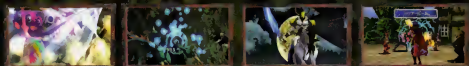
has a little surprise coming, as that was one of the worst of the lot. You just have to see these things to believe 'em.

The 20 call spells in FFVII bring back a lot of old Final Fantasy favorites (including three different Bahamuts!), but also introduce a lot of new man-to-be-legendary monsters to the series, including Kujata, Knights of the Round, and Hades.

Summon the might of legend's dearest creations to smite your foes before you!
Bahamut, Efrei, Titan, Leviathan, Rajkah, Hades, Phoenix, Odin and others await your call!

Tifa Lockhart





MORE GREAT SCENES FROM *FINAL FANTASY VII*...



Mind-blowing cut scenes highlight your adventure! The story unfolds through awesome CG movies that will blow you away!



PANTASY RACING THE ULTIMATE FANTASY

You won't just be tramping over tundra on foot. Oh no. As you'd probably guess by now, the design-meisters at Square have invented some truly spectacular (and wacky) new forms of transport to traverse the map sections of the game. Newer vehicles can even reach otherwise unobtainable areas...

In addition to the usual assortment of Chocobos, submarines, and airships, FFVII has a couple of cool new vehicles, including a short-down airplane that can do little more than skim around on shallow water, an all-terrain buggy which is able to traverse deserts and rivers to reach new islands, and crazy Chocobos that can run straight up cliffs, walk on water, and turn rocks into bread! Ha ha! The kidding about that last one of course. You see, I said that because they can walk on water. Get it?

Um, anyway, you can also drive motorcycles, snowboards, and Chocobos in the various mini-games. Displayed in 3D, these "race" sequences make a nice break from the intensity of the storyline, and are very, very cool.

Vincent Valentine





BATTLE MATHS: THE LIMIT BREAK

Final Fantasy VII also utilizes the new Limit Break system. These are basically a set of awesome special attacks which are unique to a particular character. Not even the mighty incantations of the Call Spells can match a fully powered Limit Break attack!

Almost every character in Final Fantasy VII has four levels of Limit Break, built up throughout the game. When you first start your epic quest, your characters only have a single level one 'break', and each subsequent level of Limit Break offers two more attacks. When engaged in combat, you can only release your Limit Break when your gauge reaches full power, and this gauge is built up after every hit you take (kind of like a 'jury-rigger'). Select your type of Limit Break wisely however; you cannot change it mid-

Cid Highwind



Too many hits and your party will reach their Limit Break attack! Special powers that can destroy your enemies or heal your party!



Our epic quest has ended. But yours shall begin shortly. In September to be exact, when the official version of the game is released. GameFan would advise waiting for the official version; not least because everything will be in English and therefore a lot more enjoyable! Return to us then, and read the definitive review, gawp at the even greater selection of amazing screenshots, and gawk as we reveal even more!



HIGH INTENSITY SHOOTING FOR YOUR PLAYSTATION STRAIGHT FROM THE ARCADE! TAITO'S RAYSTORM IS AMAZING!

R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - TAITO

PUBLISHER - TAITO

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



E. STORM
HIGH POWERED
SHOOTING RETURNS!

RAYSTORM



were dueling it out simultaneously. They did over-do it on the shooters, though. But did they to the point where developers have become so wary of them that they may become an endangered species here in the US?

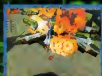
Acclaim has shown they've got the mettle to bring over the very best and so I wonder, could Raystorm be on their '97 ticket? If it is, watch out, because this is the shooter from which all 32-bit shooters will be measured in the future. (cont'd. p. 98)

Once upon a time there were so many shooters that one could find cartridges wedged under doors or balancing out wobbly home furnishings. Whip Rush, ThunderForce 1, 2, 3&4, Wings of War, Truxton,

Forgotten Worlds, Musha, Gaires, Curse, Darius, Phetios, Raiden, Steel Empire, Vapor Trail, Galaxy Force 2, Bio

Hazard, SubTerraia, Insector X, Hellfire, Super Fantasy Zone, Granada, Atomic Robo Kid, Panorama Cotton, Silpheed, SolFeace, VeryTex, Grey Lancer, Arrow Flash, Heavy Unit, Thunderblade, Space Harrier, After Burner, Zero Wing, Space Mega Force, Axel, StarFox, Super EDF, Phalanx, Aero Blaster, UN Strike, Gradius, Gates of Thunder, Dead Moon, Download, Soldier Blade,

Striggen, and Air Zank come immediately to mind when I think back to those glorious times when the SNES, Genesis, and TurboGrafx (god I miss NEC)



ARCADE
MODE
VS.
PS
MODE



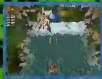
**YOU ARE THE
EARTH'S LAST HOPE**



**AUG. 5, 2219
3RD FLEET
EARTH ORBIT**



**AUG. 6,
2219
ETRURIA
SECILIA**



**AUG. 8, 2219
JUDA BASE
FINAL
CONFLICT**

**BLARING EFFECTS
FILL THE SCREEN**



**BOSS
ENCOUNTERS!
FURIOUS
MACHINES
AWAIT
YOUR
PRESENCE**

**AUGUST 4, 2219
ALBION D.U.
EARTH**

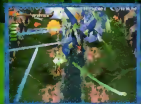
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OLD GAUL CITY
EARTH**

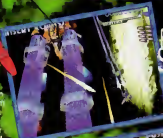
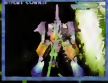
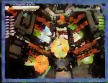
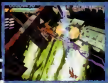


**AUG. 5
2219
PALMYRA
VALLEY
EARTH**

**AUG.
6, 2219
CARTHAGE BASE
SECILIA ORBIT**

**AUGUST 7, 2219
JUDA CENTRAL
SYSTEM
SECILIA**





IF YOU
BUY ONE
SHOOTER
THIS
YEAR...

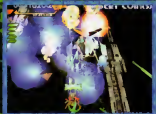
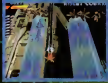
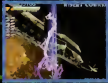
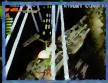


A-GRAY 1



RayStorm did well in Japanese arcades and even appeared here in select high dollar locales as a 50-cents-per-play piece. Somehow, Taito has not only duplicated the original perfectly, but managed to squeeze in a PlayStation special version as well.

The best way to describe RayStorm in terms of appearance is Axelay meets Silpheed. Except RayStorm, unlike Silpheed (which I loved), is a real time polygonal game, where Silpheed's polys were stored as FMV. The graphics are absolutely gorgeous and the frame rate is stunning, ranging between 30 & 60 fps with hordes of enemies





and effects on screen. You're hard pressed to find a single moment when some blazing effect isn't on screen and the camera work is second to none. The bosses are huge, mobile, and highly detailed beasts which pulse with life and dish out explosive attacks. Each is an inspired work. As for the music, well, ZTT (Zentata) has outdone themselves: buy the soundtrack if you listen to game music CDs.

And finally RayStorm supports 2-player gameplay, should you choose to recruit a friend. Simply put, it doesn't get much better for shooter fans. We'll keep an eye out for a US version; in the meantime, the import's out there now. Personally, I wouldn't wait on this one. **ES**



...MAKE
IT
RAY
STORM!

A-GRAY 2



**TIME ATTACK!
CHOOSE YOUR RIVAL AND HIT THE ROAD!
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO KILL?**

CIRCUIT • FREEWAY • MOUNTAIN • KAISER'S ROAD

Chase.... HQ! There, I said it. Now for the good news. While Ray Tracers is a sequel of sorts to that long lost stink-o-rama it has gone through a complete metamorphosis. Chunky sprites have become smooth, texture-mapped polygons, rancid tunes have become luscious melodies from ZTT (Zustata), and boring and hoarse have gone from cute just like yours to huge mach-style heathies that fire smoking projectiles and animate with

I'm going to say something that may make more than a few of you cringe as you hearken back to that matinee of bad game theatre...

RAY TRACERS

stunning realism. Besides these 6 levels of high speed burning carnage, RT features a Time Trial Mode where you can either choose a rival or simply go for the record. I think it's safe to say that Chase HQ is dead, while the concept lives on in pure PlayStation splendor. Now let's see, I've got a hunch more space to fill and I've pretty much said what needs to be said. Hmm, let me see... Oh yesh, here's something cool. The courses are no longer simply long stretches of boring highway, oo eir. Now, in many instances you'll break through barriers or veer off into grassy canyons, sewers, underground tunnels, and other such diverse terrain. As you speed towards the climactic end battle, enemy vehicles surround you at every turn. You can either pass them, (attempt to at least), or, by ramming into them, cause them to explode which results in impressive pyrotechnics. Depending how fast you complete each course, your time is allotted to destroy the boss. Save your furber--Is Ray Tracers, the enemy is quite intelligent. The



**R
REVIEW**



DEVELOPER • TAITO

PUBLISHER • TAITO

FORMAT • CD

OF PLAYERS • 1

DIFFICULTY • INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE • NOW JAPAN



I. STORM
THE CLASSIC NO
REINCARNATED
MAKES THE OLD
ONE LOOK
ANCIENT!



**Huge foes await! Ramming
Speed! Go baby go! Yūdanman!**

game moves along at a blistering frame rate, by the way: in fact, it may be the fastest in its class, and a large class that is. So if you're looking for a little import flavor in your PS arena by all means, have a look at Taiyo's latest. They are quickly emerging as a top PS developer. Wait 'til you see Ray Storm (pg. 97). Oh my. I can't wait to see what they come up with next! **ES**

JAPAN NOW

Mountain Pass Fastest Drift Master (a rough translation of the title) is coming to the US under the moniker of *Peak Performance* featuring Pikes Peak hillclimb for PlayStation. If you've always wanted to power slide your way around twisting mountain roads, Atlus has got a game for you.

For starters, you have a wonderful assortment of cars to choose from—over 20 in all. And aside from a few highly specialized vehicles like a stadium truck and a racing apeo Viper, high performance Japanese cars flesh out the remaining selections. Now you can finally blast through winding mountain roads in the raucous Japanese market-specific Nissan Skyline or Europe Roadster. All of the cars are wonderfully modeled and shaded and truly resemble their real life counterparts. Most astounding however, is the amount of detail in each car's interior. You can actually see your listless guy inside shifting. Get the car sideways enough and you'll even see him flinging the wheel around like a madman. I was impressed when



I first saw those little diamond-headed guys inside the car in Sega Rally for Saturn, but this takes it to a whole new level.

Outside the car, things remain fairly impressive. Treeboids detail is good, the 3D engine is fast and smooth and there's only the slightest pop-up. And, as the name implies, you'll be driving on some fantastic courses that undulate and twist their way around mountains. On top of that, the courses themselves are extremely long.

As for the play mechanics, the title says it all: *prepare to drift*. And why not? It's a total blast and executed very well in this game. Yank the hand brake and watch as the tail end of your car breaks loose and you fly around a corner. Good fun, indeed. The computer is relatively easy to beat, but it is the plethora of options that gives *Peak Performance* its longevity. There are five sources to choose from,



each with the option to race them forward, backward, at night, in the afternoon, or at sunset. In two player mode, you can race with a horizontal or vertical split screen, both with very good frame rates. There is a time trial mode and even a gymkhana course where you can set up your own course and weave between them. Finally, there is the amazing story mode, (which will be omitted from the US version) where, in you go one on one against a trash talking, cigarette-smoking rival.

Add the wealth of options to the nicely done visuals and you have a fine racing title. The domestic version should be out as you read this, so if you like your racing heavy on the drifting, you'll totally dig this. 80



PEAK PERFORMANCE



天外魔境 第四の黙示録 The Apocalyptic

Play

Hudson

01 14 97



Takuru

The *Tengai Makyō* series has the distinct honor of being the only major Japanese RPG series that has never been translated into English. As excellent as this series is, we rarely cover it for just that reason. But this time, I just couldn't resist, as the setting for this installment (full title: *Tengai Makyō: The Fourth Revelation: The Apocalypse IV*) is none other than the history of this great land we call (enfin!)... America! Sort of.

Past *Tengai Makyō* games were based on the writings of an apparently fictional Westerner and his unlearned impressions of late 19th century Japan. This time, the roles are reversed, and the developers made *TM:TFR:TA4* based on their own clouded ideas of American history and geography.

And so what if all the dates are completely wrong, and both Seattle and Portland are neighboring cities in that most Northwestern of states, Montana? That's half the charm. *TM:TFR:TA4* has a very cool storyline, with an interesting mix of hilarious hijinks and occasionally serious plot points based on the Bible's Book of Revelations.

As a game, *Tengai Makyō*'s strongest point is its video quality. The animation in this game is all full screen, 30fps, and with none of that chunky Cinepak screen garbage (although miraculously, it *is* Cinepak). This video is, astonishingly, better than the PlayStation's best, even though in every single previous game, the Saturn has lagged far behind in video quality.

The battles are impressive, with full screen enemies that look great, but could stand a few more frames of animation. Unfortunately, the overheads are disappointing, with simplistic visuals and bland colors reminiscent of PC edutainment titles. While it's cool to be visiting such actual locations as New Orleans, Phoenix, New York and Hollywood, the game would be much more enjoyable if they didn't look so bland.

The mixture of stereotypical American history and biblical imagery is a guarantee that *TM:TFR:TA4*, etc, will never make its way to the states. But import buyers might enjoy this one as both a pretty good RPG and a fascinating cultural curiosity.

T

Full screen battles, with Hudson's astounding "High-Brid" animation!



THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES... A POWERFUL ORGANIZATION CHALLENGES THE GREATEST WARRIORS IN THE WORLD TO DETERMINE JUST WHO IS...

THE KING OF Fighters '96

TEAM EDIT ALLOWS FOR HUNDREDS OF FIGHTER COMBINATIONS!
CHOOSE FROM SNK'S BIGGEST STARS AND CREATE THE ULTIMATE TEAM!



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SNK

PUBLISHER - SNK

PLATFORM - S, C, 32X, SATURN

IF IN PLAYERS - 2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW, JAPAN



SHIDOSHI
COMING BACK WHEN
YOU KNOW UP!



With Rugal defeated in the previous year's tournament, it seems the King of Fighters competition may no longer go on. A young woman named Kagura Oshiro, however, steps up and announces that she will fight it herself. Kagura guards an ancient evil power known as 'Orochi,' and she is on a quest to find the strongest warriors in the world to help her protect it from Goenitz. Goenitz is one of four Orochi 'Elementalists,' and wishes to release the mystical energy so that he can use it to conquer the world.

Thus opens SNK's latest fighting game, *King of Fighters '96*. I awaited this one with excitement, not only because I'm a huge SNK fan, but because KOF '95 is still one of my favorite 2D fighting games. Yet, I did have one reservation: In all of SNK's fighting game series, the third title has always been a very poor game. This being the third KOF, I was a bit worried.





Thankfully, my fear was for no reason. *KOF '96* is an exceptional game, and a solid progression of the series. Play control is very close to '95, yet with little modifications to balance out gameplay. Changes range from giving short attacks more of a delay, to replacing the "background dodge" ability with a somewhat less cheesy roll. Some existing characters get new moves, or tweaks of their old ones, and as always, a new bunch of participants show up for this year's competition. Making an appearance are Kasumi and Mc Big from *Art of Fighting*, Geese Howard and Wolfgang Krause from *Fatal Fury*, and original characters Mature, Vice, and Leona, among others. Most of the new characters are great additions (except for Kasumi), yet I'm a bit upset at some of the decisions concerning who was taken out to make room (they should've kept Billy!).

Graphic quality and detail is at its usual high level, and many returning characters were given new standing poses and animation (and if you thought Mai couldn't get any, er, "bouncier," just wait until you see her).

Backgrounds range from the simply okay, to the absolutely amazing: two notable stages are the streets of Osaka with its cars zooming by and huge monitors playing clips of animation, and the stadium with its roaring crowd and onlookers walking around wearing huge heads depicting their favorite fighters.

So how does the Saturn version compare to the original arcade and Neo-Geo cart versions? Very well, thanks in part to the RAM cart that SNK has produced. The only real disappointment is the character samples, which are a little muffled and soft. Still, it's a fabulous translation, and excusable when you see all of the animation and background detail. And, remember, *KOF '95* had its own specialized RAM cart, and its background music wasn't redbook audio as it is in '96. On a side note, SNK has started doing with its Saturn games what it does with its Neo-Geo games: There is an English option which allows you to play the game fully in English. A wonderful option, especially considering it's rather unlikely we'll see this game in America anytime soon.

Thankfully, while it seems that, day by day, 2D fans like Nick Fox and myself are becoming extinct, companies like SNK still care about us. *King of Fighters '96* is a top-quality fighting game, and is not only a must for all SNK fans out there who don't own a Neo-Geo or Neo-CD, but for all fighting game fans as well. S



**100%
OFFICIAL!**

GAMEFAN BOOKS™

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TUROK

DINOSAUR HUNTER

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FROM JAPAN COMES A HEAVY DOSE OF SATURN 2D POWER... BUT WILL THIS MYSTIC DEFENDER EVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY IN AMERICA?



If fond memories of the classic Mystic Defender (an early Genesis masterpiece) came screaming to mind the first time I laid eyes on TWI's Psychic Warlock... it wasn't until playing it however, that I realized this could easily be considered that game's sequel, should Sega wrap it up for a domestic release. Don't hold your breath though, I doubt SOA knows it exists. The game was produced by the unlikelyst of companies, Time Warner Interactive... Japan. And even if they did, a game dealing with such dark themes would likely be turned away. Here it is, though, for your viewing pleasure, a hot 2.5D game for the Saturn made up primarily of beautifully textured polygons and bursting with inspired special effects. Literally everything you see, except for the distant horizon and the characters, is polygonal. The Saturn's 2D engine is indeed a screamer. 50,000 were produced before TWI Japan ceased operations. A fitting swan song, indeed.



**R
REVIEW**



DEVELOPER - TIME WARNER

PUBLISHER - TIME WARNER

FORMAT - CD

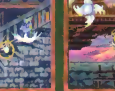
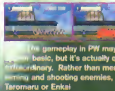
1. OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



E. STORM
THE SATURN FLEXES
ITS 2D MUSCLE.



The gameplay in PW may seem basic, but it's actually quite extraordinary. Rather than merely aiming and shooting enemies, Taromaru or Enkai lock on and fire bursts of energy.

This energy can be accumulated by holding down the attack button and unleashed upon releasing. A full charge sends a furious stream of death through every living soul. You can block enemy attacks



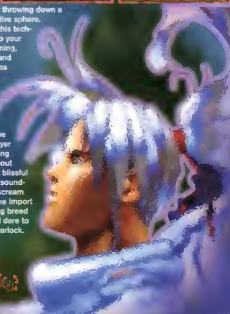


POLYGONAL STRUCTURES BORROWED FROM THE PS3



by throwing down a protective sphere. Mastering this technique is key to your survival. Platforming, sliding, dashing, and some amazing boss encounters along with some super cool

level design garnish the feast. It's hardly ever straight walk and shoot, and when it is, it's intense. All this, combined with the unique attack mechanism and a two player mode makes for a very challenging and entertaining, albeit short (about an hour and change) game. But blissful graphics, fresh gameplay, and a soundtrack right out of ancient Japan scream play me again. If you frequent the import market, add this legacy of a dying breed to your quiver of games and dare to walk in the sandals of a warlock.



SEGA SATURN 2 NEWS AND SPECS!

Ok, first things first. Although these specs came from a reliable source (a top Sega developer who recently received a Saturn 2 development station), they may change in the months leading up to Saturn 2's official announcement. Having said that, the specs are current as of this month, and we know you'd want to know them...

The first revelation about the Saturn 2 (the name will change) is that the machine will once again be CD-based. Sega wants a 12x speed "CD-Rom" to minimize loading, along with between 8 to 16 megabytes of RAM (yet to be decided)—an unprecedented amount of memory for a videogame console. The machine will be powered by a Hitachi 64-bit CPU (rumored to run at speeds of 150 MHz) and come complete with a 64-bit graphics chip based on a current PC 3D accelerator card called the Monster 3D. The sound chip is said to be a Creative Labs AWE 32, a high-end PC sound card that is actually used by musicians to mix tunes!

The Saturn 2 is currently scheduled for a Sept. 1998 release date to Japan, with a US launch shortly afterwards. The price being quoted at the moment is between \$250 to \$350 (in Japan) though that may change. All internal Sega development teams have taken delivery of their development systems already, and Sega has told them that they must have their launch games ready by no later than August 1998. We have no news yet on what those launch titles might be, but either as enhanced VF3 or possibly even VF4 is likely.

SATURN NEWS

Unfortunately, Sega will NOT be releasing Warp's spectacular FMV adventure, *Enemy Zero* (EO), here in the States due to bad focus testing. It's possible that some other American publisher may pick it up, but don't hold your breath. *Fighters Megamix*, AM2's spectacular 3D fighter, will not be released until June, and there's even a rumor that VF3 may not even make it here due to high costs (the upgrade/memory card itself costs around \$60)! In related news, Team Amibrosia is currently working on a sequel to *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* for release later this year, and get this—it's going to be an RPG and not a 3D shooter. Yaj! Naka is also hard at work on *NIGHTS 2* set to debut in Japan in July, and the USA is September. The game is said to feature the same style of gameplay (2D control in a 3D environment) though this time with a vastly improved graphics engine that displays approximately three times as many polygons as the original.

WILLIAMS PROJECTS FOR '97

During a recent visit, Williams gave us the lowdown on a few of the games they will be showing at E3. For the N64 there will be *Quake* (yes!), *San Francisco Rush*, *Robotron X*, *War Gods*, *Wayne Gretzky 2*, *Just X* and *MK4*. All games are 96-neg carts to be released in the third or fourth quarter. Williams also told us about an all new *Mortal Kombat* RPG that is being produced by John Tobias. *MK Mythologies: Sub-Zero's Adventures* for the PS and N64 will be a 4th-quarter release and will feature characters and locations from the *MK* universe. For the PlayStation Williams is currently developing a follow up to the *Williams Arcade Classics* CD and an all new 3-D version of Atari's legendary *Centipede*.

NINTENDO DROPS PRICE OF N64 AND DELAYS MORE GAMES! DDH

Last week, Nintendo announced that the price of the Nintendo 64 in Japan will drop by a third from 24,800 Yen (\$249 US) to 19,800 Yen (\$135 US). Accordingly, NDA are not to announce a price drop for the American N64 at E3 to \$149.99. Rumor has it that the 64DD might NOT be at the show, simply because Nintendo wants their N64 user base to grow before they bring out an add-on. As for *Zelda 64*, NOJ recently announced that the game will NOT be 64DD, and will instead be released as a 129-meg cart in the 4th quarter. Then, when the 64DD is released next year, Nintendo will release a new disk version of *Zelda* with more levels and features that weren't in the cart version.

In other 64DD news, Ganyo Takeda, the man responsible for the 64DD and the N64 controller, recently told the Japanese press that there were 19 games in development for 64DD: *Zelda 64 Plus*, *Sim City*, *Mario Paint*, *Super Mario RPG 2*, *Fire Emblem 64*, *Pocket Monsters 64*, *Cabbage* (same will change), *Base Turt No. 1 Part 2* (a fishing game), *Mother 3* and *Super Mario 64 2* (which will now feature different player-controlled characters, SM63 style).

Nintendo will ship the 64DD in the 4th quarter of 1997 in Japan, with between 2 to 3 titles available at launch. NDA is aiming for a 1st quarter 1998 release in the States, though that's expected to change.

Finally, Miyamoto has a new RPG in the works (the format is unknown) that is said to be Nintendo's attempt to counter Square's *FFVII* and Enix's *Dragon Quest 7*. Shyeah, right!

SONY NEWS

It's official. Enix has signed a deal with Sony of Japan stating that the highly antici-

ped *Dragon Quest 7* will be a PlayStation exclusive. The game is rumored to be in development for a Summer '98 release date in Japan, with a US version not scheduled until 1st quarter 1999. Also, Sony of America will release the US version under their own label and not Enix's, just like they do with Square.

Sony's first RPG, *Beyond the Beyond*, has sold over 100,000 copies to date, and Sony is very excited about the success of a relatively low-key RPG. Coupled with the success at *Suikoden*, this is good news for PS-owning RPG fans.

Tekken 3 will hit the PS later this year with an upgrade pack that enables the PS to perfectly emulate Namco's system 12 clone-up. *Wipeout 3* is also in development for later this year, with new tracks and new vehicles.

Finally, we have some preliminary information on PlayStation 2. Set to ship in 1999 in Japan, the rumored specs consist of a 64-bit 200 MHz CPU, a 64-bit graphics chip that can handle 5 to 19 million flat-shaded polygons per second, and 32 Megs of RAM! Already word reaches as that *FFVIII* is to debut on this new system, though no one is quite sure where.

FINAL ROUND...

Any Chazael, the developers of *Poed*, have ceased development of *Poed 2* for the PS because they couldn't find a publisher to sell their game. Instead of making videogames, Any Channel is concentrating on developing a 3D rendering engine for the PC that is said to completely eliminate the need for 3D accelerator cards! Hmmm...

Westwood Studios still hasn't begun development on *Command & Conquer* for the N64, though they admit that tactically it is possible. They are currently in the process of converting the C&C pseudo-isometric, *Red Alert*, and *Units of Lore* to PS for a 4th quarter release.

Street Fighter Vs. X-Men on the Saturn will ship with a RAM upgrade cartridge and should be out by July. Capcom has pushed back the release date on *Resident Evil 2* from March to the end of the year in Japan. The US version is expected to hit some 2 to 3 months after that. The game will now come on 2 CDs and will be at least 50% bigger than the first. The Saturn version of *Resident Evil* is also in development. Subtitled *Resident Evil Dash*, the game will be released in Japan this Summer and will include features exclusive to the Saturn. Last but not least, Capcom confirmed that *Street Fighter III* WILL be converted to consoles, though no specific platforms were mentioned. Place your bets now, ladies and gentlemen!

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FROM A CAVE DEEP INSIDE AGOURA...



Dear Postie,

I can't believe the space they left you in February 1997 issue! You should take as xx to the Editor-in-Chief for that!

I would also like to reply to what Chris Jones said in that same issue. Yes, Chris, I comprehend what you're saying, but it proves you are a complete idiot. The reason you always play the role of a character in RPGs is because THAT'S WHAT MAKES THE FREAKIN' GENRE! You think about that, Chris: Role Playing Game. Goz!

Finally, I'd like to crown Takahi as the king of GameFan. He's always reviewing the hottest RPGs and writes with intelligence!

Takahi rules!
Sincerely,
Adam Liodney
Hawaii, WA

I received a number of heated letters that took offense to Chris Jones' "I hate RPGs" rant. All I can say is, take it easy guys, it's a free(h) country. Mr. Jones is entitled to his opinion just like everyone else! Even if it is tragically and woefully misinformed. As for Feb '97, don't remind me. My psyche is scarred forever.

Dear Parveyor of Postography,

I get your map often (I'm going to get a subscription) and I love the way you've been giving us updates on... FINAL FANTASY VIII. Ahem. I own a PlayStation (naturally) and I can't wait till... FINAL FANTASY VII comes out. I love the FF series and this one looks like it rules! Anyway, a few questions on... FINAL FANTASY VII:

1. Are Cid, Tifa, Red XIII, Vincent, Cloud, and Yuffie controllable party members?
2. Are there any more characters?
3. It's already out in Japan but, when will it be

out here?

4. Will it be Final Fantasy VII or IV (I hope it is VII, it sounds more dramatic)?

5. If Shin-ra runs on Makora energy, then why is it SEC (Shin-ra Electric Power Company)?

6. What kind of pencils does Tetsuya Nomura use?

7. Isn't Tifa cute?

That's it. Seven questions, ironic, huh?

Jeremy Thomas
Dunelmoo, OK

This letter is just the tip of Final Fantasy iceberg that smothered into my post-bag Titanic this month. Hopefully Takahi's review should answer most of your questions, but for those of you who have worked yourself up into a unstoppable FFVII feeding frenzy, here's a few more FF suggests.

1. Yes. All of them.
2. I take it you mean playable characters other than the above? Not that I know of. But there is a Game Shark code that allows you to have Saphires and P-Cloud in your party.
3. September the 7th is the date to mark on your calendar. Just think... that's nearly six months till you get to play an English version of FFVII. Bet you wished you read Japanese now, eh?
4. Good news Jeremy. Sony feels the game is now distinguished enough to retain the Japanese series title. FFVII it is!
5. Hmmm. That's a good question. Probably because Shin-ra transforms the energy from the planet into electricity.
6. The lead kind.
7. Disrespectfully so. Just wait for the ending! And Jeremy, took up 'ironic' in the dictionary.

Dear Postmaster,

I'm really worried. You see, I've got a

Saturn, and after a quick trip home to the States, I finally got a chance to see the PlayStation dominating the gaming scene first hand. For me, it was positively frightening. As stores that had demo machines set up, the Saturn demo either wasn't working or had some overly lackluster game running (the original WWI Come on!) whereas the PS has games like Star Gladiator, Twisted Metal 2 or Total No. 1. And I haven't even mentioned the N64.

Now I'm back in Japan and it seems that the Saturn is faltering here as well. It's most likely due to the promise of FFVII for the PS. But why are really cool anime-related games coming out for the PS only? I mean look at it: Jetum Zone, Renma 1/2, Ghost in the Shell, Seiber, Mariotte J and Battle Angel to name a few. Okay, the Saturn got a Microcos shooter, two Evangelion adventure games and a Magic Knight Rayearth RPG (I'm still waiting, Working Designs). The PS has the edge by far.

Now here's the kicker—I just read in a Japanese gaming mag something that made my heart skip a beat in a bad way—Dragon Quest VII and 'PlayStation'! It doesn't spell the beginning of the end and I don't know what does. Hello, Sega. It there was ever a chance to make a new Fantasy Star game, this is it!

Don't get me wrong, I love my Saturn. It's just I don't want to see my game system of choice get crushed by Sony's marketing muscle and Nintendo's popularity, or get left out in the cold by all the third parties. I've been down that road before with my Duo. It's not a pleasant drive.

So Posty, what do you make of this dilemma? Is the Saturn being overshadowed in almost every aspect by the PS? Does Sega have any ace up their sleeves to pull them through this crisis? I would greatly appreciate your input.
Dustin Blaine Javier
NAF Atsugi, Japan

Well, when you're right, you're right. I won't try to sugar coat it Dustin, the Saturn is definitely third in the race right now. The amount of times I've seen default Saturn displays in chain stores is truly distressing. But I don't think Sega is ready to give up the ghost quite yet.

Besides, why should the PlayStation's success stop you enjoying your system, or the numerous brilliant games available for it? Independence Day may well be the highest grossing film ever, but does that make it the best? Of course not. You're right not to underestimate the importance of the End/Sony deal, but I wouldn't worry too much about Sega losing third party support... Even though the Saturn has sold less units than the PS or N64, as Yuchi Aoyagi pointed out, the Sega star line is proportionately more active than Sony or Nintendo, meaning it is still profitable to produce a Saturn game. As for ace up sleeves, the new Bandai merger should bring a few surprises, and keep an eye out for VF3...

Dear Omnipotent Meister of Post,

Being one of the female gamers writing in, I would first like to compliment you on hitting our voices as heard. The videogame community cannot ignore us! Now onto my rant. Who was it that said Tetsuya Nomura's FFVII art sucked?

GAMEFAN: UP TO THE MINUTE

As usual, we just can't close an issue of GameFan without squeezing in every last bit of goods. These Wild 9 shots arrived just hours before we shipped film and so, we booted a house ad and voila! Wild 9!

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Shiny games have always delivered one thing—a new and refreshing gaming experience. Clothes, they do not make. They're pioneers, dad-gum-it! Their latest experiment, Wild 9 is still a ways out (4th Q) as the team tackles the formidable challenge they've once again laid out for themselves.

Judging by these screens I believe it's safe to assume that the camera work in W9 promises to be absolutely phenomenal. The storyline I'm told, is equally capacious, with TV and action figure tie-ins already on the horizon. We'll dive deep in to W9 the moment we get a preview copy. Until then enjoy the latest batch of actual screens we've seen in many moons.



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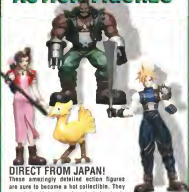
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